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The world of animated films and comic art

Funnyworld

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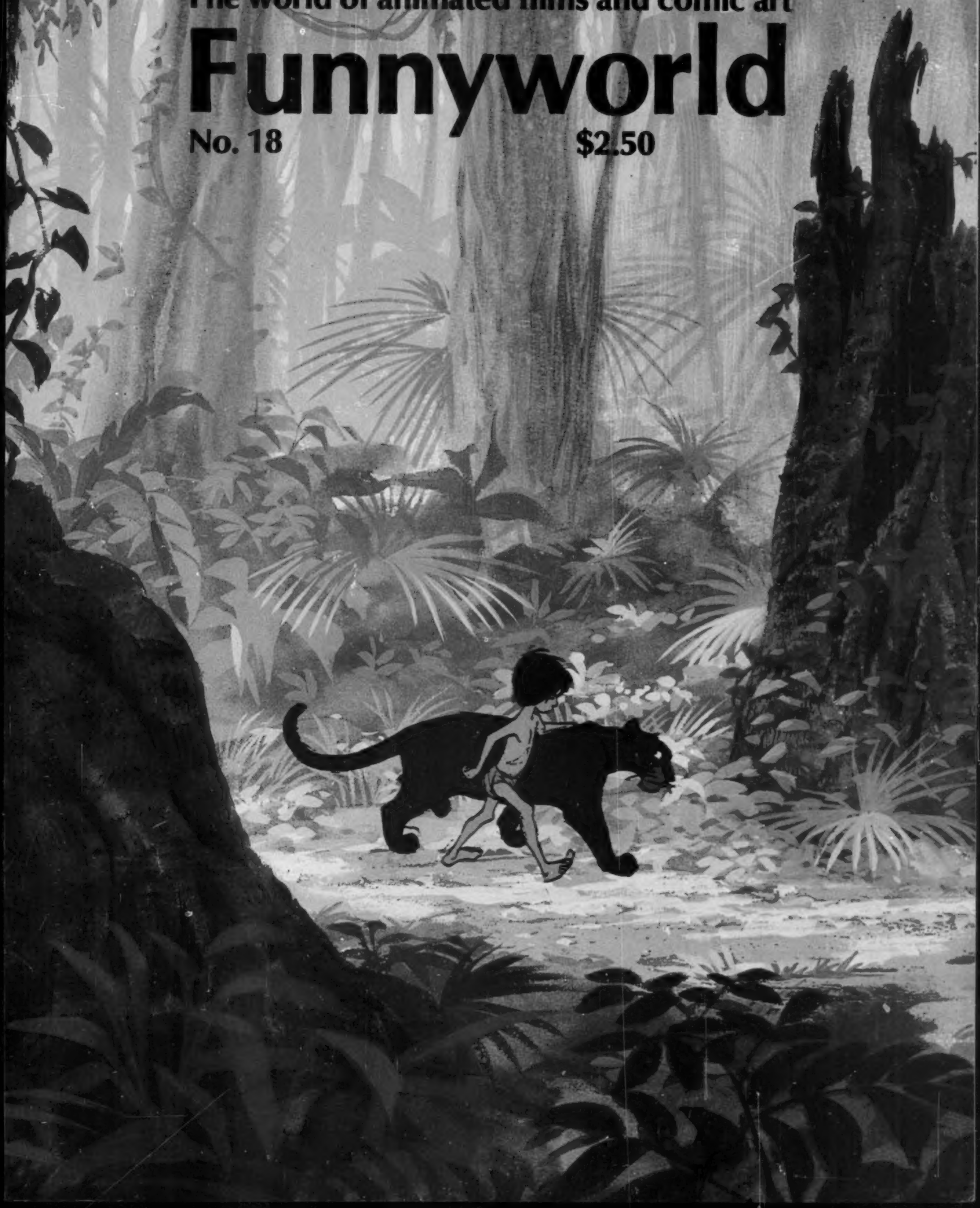

SECRET ANIMATION SECRETS

OF THE PROS

NO 1: APPEARANCE

Study this picture. This is a random sampling of the top animation people in the world today. Does *your* appearance measure up?

Zander's Animation parlour

Watch this page for further secret animation secrets of the pros.

On the Cover

Jungle Book (1967), the last animated feature to be personally produced by Walt Disney, will be reissued this summer. To mark the occasion, *Funny world*'s cover is devoted to a scene from that film, depicting the boy Mowgli and the panther Bagheera. A retrospective review of *Jungle Book* will be published in *Funnyworld* No. 19.

Editorial

Funnyworld No. 17 was dated Fall 1977, and *Funnyworld* No. 18 is dated Summer 1978; but since *Funnyworld* No. 17 was actually published in the winter of 1978, the gap is more apparent than real. No. 17 was originally scheduled to be published in the summer of 1977, but ghastly production problems delayed that issue for six months. (The problems were reflected in No. 17's ragged typography and the coarse screening of some of the illustrations — all due to an unfortunate choice of typesetters. A second typesetting firm had to be called in to finish the job, and it could not quite match the typeface that the first typesetter had used. So, rest assured — it was not your eyes, the type really was different.)

In any case, the clouds have broken, at least for a while. I hope you will enjoy the new — and much more frequent — *Funnyworld.*

Book Work. In *Funnyworld* No. 17, I reported on the progress I have made in the research for the history of American animated cartoons that I am writing for Oxford University Press. I am happy to say that my research is continuing at a rapid pace. In the last few months, Milt Gray and I have interviewed the following people, in person or by mail: Bob Allen, Pete Alvarado, Bob Bemiller, Al Eugster, Carl Fallberg, Paul Fennell, John Fitzsimmons, June Foray, Jerry Hausner, George Jorgensen, Alex Lovy, Jim Macdonald, Manuel Moreno, Clarence Nash, Dan Noonan, Hawley Pratt, Ed Rehberg, John Rose, Paul Satterfield, Zack Schwartz, Larry Silverman, Dick Thomas, Carl Urbano, Xenia, and Alan Zazlov. In addition, Milt has recorded followup interviews with Bill Hurtz, Dick Lundy, and Don Williams. More than 140 persons have now been interviewed for the book, and the total will easily pass the 150 that Milt and I have set as our minimum goal. We are still interested in hearing from people in animation who can contribute to our knowledge of the industry and the art form, especially those who worked in animation in the '20's and '30's.

Jim Pabian's name was inadvertantly omitted from the list in *Funnyworld* No. 17 of people who have been interviewed.

My request in No. 17 for help in locating some people who have worked in animation has resulted in a flood of addresses — and, in some cases, letters directly from the people I asked about. I have been encouraged by that response to list some more names:

Hal Adelquist, Henry Binder, Norman Blackburn, Eyvind Earle, George Grandpre, Ken Harris, Paul Hopkins, Margaret Winkler Mintz, Larry Morey, Charles Payzant, Pepe Ruiz, Herb Ryman, Leonard Sebring, Terrell Stapp, George Winkler, Marvin Woodward, Cy Young.

Undoubtedly, some of the people I've listed above are no longer living, but I want to confirm that. There are other people whom I know have died, and about whom I'd like to know more, from the people who worked with them. Here is a sampling of such names, in no particular order:

Charles Philippi, Hugh Hennesy, Manny Gould, Otto Englander, Tom Codrick, Norman Ferguson, Bernard Garbutt, Art Heinemann, Ken Hultgren, Earl Hurd, John Lounsbery, Ham Luske, John McLeish (Ployardt), Josh Meador, Fred Moore, Perce Pearce, Pinto Colvig, Erdman Penner, Harry Reeves, Bill Roberts, Ted Sears, John Sibley, Webb Smith, Fred Spencer, George Stallings, Riley Thompson, Bill Tytla, Harvey Eisenberg, and Bill Garity.

In some cases, I have already benefited from the extensive recollections of people who worked with these men; but since they are no longer here to speak for themselves, I am under a heavy obligation to talk to as many of their co-workers as possible, to insure accuracy.

My address and phone number are 226 N. Saint Asaph, Alexandria, Va. 22314, (703) 549-3684. Milt Gray can be reached at P. O. Box 1173, Burbank, Calif. 91505, and by phone at (213) 980-2556.

Errata. *Funnyworld* No. 17 had more than its share of typographical goofs (*"Saludas Amigos,"* "Dopy"), but the biggest goof was mine alone, and it came on page 45, at the end of the Dick Huemer interview, where I suggested that "Peter and the Wolf" was part of *Fun and Fancy Free.* It isn't; it is in *Make Mine Music.*

Because of the coarse screening of the T. Hee caricature on page 40, the point of the joke was lost. In the drawing, Bill Cottrell is saying, "Your face is familiar but — I can't recall the number!" Huemer replies, "Oh, I'm '002268' but *you* can call me '2'-'2.'"

Poor reproduction also took its toll on the photo on page 41; worse, some of the men in that photo were not identified. Stuart Buchanan, who at one point had the title of "casting director" at the Disney studio (whatever that meant), is on the left, and Bill Garity, the studio's technical chief, is at the right. The man standing directly behind Huemer has not been identified.

I was off by one year in the release date for *The Scarlet Pumpernickel;* it was released in March 1950.

Letters. Because of *Funnyworld*'s accelerated publication schedule, only a few letters of comments on No. 17 had been received by the time the copy for this issue was submitted to the typesetters. A full letters section will appear in No. 19.

Mike Barrier

Front cover © 1967 by Walt Disney Productions

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Back cover courtesy of Mrs. Elfriede Fischinger

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Back issues: copies of *Funnyworld* No. 17 are available for $2.50 each. All back issues of *Funnyworld* are available in microform (including Xerox copies) from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106.

An "abstract" love letter mailed from Oskar to Elfriede in 1931.

Elfriede!

On the Road with Mrs. Oskar Fischinger

By JOHN CANEMAKER

January 13, 1977. Elfriede settled down in the back seat of the taxi that was hurtling through the late-afternoon Manhattan traffic. The sun was winter-bright and unusually warm and so she unbuttoned an outercoat made of what looked like blond yak curls, revealing her beloved traveling pants-suit of purple corduroy.

Even with our crazed Israeli cabdriver attempting to leap over the cars on the Triborough Bridge, the trip to Kennedy Airport would take almost half an hour, cutting dangerously close to Elfriede's scheduled departure time for Hollywood and home. But, surrounded by several large canvas bags of heavy film cans and reels, and portfolios of dozens of valuable drawings and paintings — all created by her late husband, Oskar Fischinger — Elfriede sat there, relaxed, grinning like a jolly Teutonic Buddha and with characteristic ebullience talking a mile a minute in a German accent as tasty as sauerbraten.

"Oh, Chawn! I'm tso gladt you could come oudt to Kenned-tee wit mee. I have been pushzing this ball und itz sznow-balling. Budt, itz sznowballing because Oskar's work is Oskar's work — it is goodt! And what is goodt, after all, stays."

The great and good artistic legacy of Oskar Fischinger, fiercely independent champion of the absolute film of abstract experimentation, might not have reached as many young people, or it might have built its new audience much more slowly in a less dynamic way — it would not have "snowballed" — were it not for the passionate promotion of the work by Fischinger's 66-year-old widow, Elfriede.

She was in New York this one particular day lining up 1977 lecture/screening dates for what would prove to be a banner year in the public's awareness of Oskar Fischinger and his art. The day before, I had picked her up at Kennedy

©1978 by John Canemaker

after a mutual friend phoned and read to me a terse nightletter from Elfriede in Europe: "Please advise John Canemaker of my arrival."

"I think she wants you to meet her plane," said the friend.

Part of Elfriede's considerable charm is her aggressive belief that people, even casual acquaintances (as I was at that time) will provide help when she needs it — and she is not afraid to ask for it by direct or indirect means.

She *needed* help. Her baggage was, as always, considerable. Film cans, portfolios of press clippings, photos, and artwork, as well as her personal luggage, were her only traveling companions to the "Second Festival International Du Film Abstract," held December 2-5, 1976, in Montpellier, France. She attended a special tribute to Oskar Fischinger and while there she managed to book her husband's films into the Melkweg Cinema in Amsterdam on January 7-9.

"Tzey went wild over Oskar," she reported jubilantly, as she dove into the bags to pull out posters and program brochures.

Another triumph, but Elfriede being Elfriede, it was not without problems. Bad luck always seemed to run parallel with the good in Oskar's life and the same goes for his widow. On this European trip Elfriede's purse was stolen in Amsterdam; in the purse were gold medals awarded at Montpellier and original negatives of stills of Oskar at the Disney studio in 1939. Irreplaceable and now gone.

She also tripped, fell, and chipped her front tooth in France. "I can never szmile again," she giggled, grinning ear-to-ear and pushing her chubby cheeks into crinkled masses that pressed her impish eyes into slits, making her face look like the theatrical mask of comedy.

"Well is as well is," she waxed philosophically about the yin and yang of her colorful life. "Life goes on satisfactorily, when you are content to accept it and hail every day that is given to you."

Elfriede's formidable energy is of the happy variety at the moment; depending on circumstances, however, she can channel that energy immediately into one of several different directions. Jealousy, suspicion, fear or despair, among other feelings, can come pouring forth in Wagnerian proportions as absolute and uncompromising as her late husband's films. Her anger is especially striking, particularly when she is defending a point about Oskar and/or his work. Elfriede loves a good fight! As with all of her chameleon-like changes of temperament, her anger is a *pure* distillation of emotion — an angry defense worthy of the valkyrie who carried slain heroes to Valhalla.

Since Oskar Fischinger's death in 1967, Mrs. Fischinger has collected, catalogued and preserved material related to Oskar's work in film and painting. In 1970, she met filmmaker/poet/critic William Moritz, who has been of enormous help with the material, which includes over 200 cans of film and hundreds of letters and notes, as well as still photographs and press clippings, most of the drawings and cels for his animated abstract films, nearly 700 oil and pastel paintings, and various inventions and camera and film apparatus.

It is a Herculean task that continues at the "Fischinger Archives," which is what she calls her house in the Hollywood hills. ("You should come out and see the Archives, Chawn. Der is so-o-o much!") When she is not picking through the chronicles of Oskar, Elfriede picks and chooses which film festivals, universities, or museums will screen a Fischinger retrospecive.

She selects the best offer in terms of showcasing Oskar's work and in terms of financial arrangements; for, sadly, Oskar's legacy did not include financial support for his widow and five children. The last 15 years of the artist's life were marked by sporadic film and painting commissions and deteriorating health, with the attendant doctor and hospital bills. Elfriede, in a letter to me, once compared Oskar with one of his peers: "How much money and/or glory must have meant to him and how little it always meant to Oskar. (Much too little, sorry to say.)"

She always charges a fee for screening the films, she told me recently, because she believes "institutions are there for artists, artists are not there for institutions!" In 1972, when La Cinematheque Francaise in Paris extended an invitation to Mrs. Fischinger-and-films, she was warned not to ask the institute's founder Henri Langlois for a fee.

"Then he will not have Oskar Fischinger. I'm not making any exceptions," was her reply. A private meeting between Elfriede and the stout Langlois was hastily arranged.

Langlois' greeting to her was, "Madame Fischinger, business *c'est la guerre*?

"Yep," Elfriede smiled. "Business *c'est la guerre*!"

"How much do you want?"

"Fifty dollars. And you can give it to me in any currency or you can pay my hotel bill. I don't care."

Langlois pulled five ten-dollar bills out of his pocket, gave them to Elfriede and said, "Please don't tell anybody I paid for your show."

Another source of income is generated by the sales and rental of over 30 Fischinger films which can be obtained through Elfriede herself or through distributors such as Pyramid Films, Creative Film Society, and the Museum of Modern Art. She also put together a small "film-flip booklet" made from copies of 72 drawings, or six seconds, from Oskar's *Mutoscope Reel No. 1* (1945). The booklet of starbursts and swirling comets sells for a couple of dollars wherever Elfriede appears. It helps, as the lectures, film sales and rentals have helped her to get by in the last 10 years. ("People should know it is difficult to live and save films with no money. I have never gotten a grant from the A. F. I., or anybody else, to do this work.")

The taxi was now inching through homeward-bound rush-hour traffic on the Grand Central Parkway, past dreary row houses near Flushing Meadow Park, site of the 1964 New York World's Fair. To pass the time, I asked Elfriede about her background, where she comes from and how she met Oskar. She seemed genuinely surprised that I would want to know such things. Usually people want to know just about Oskar.

"I was born in Gelnhausen, near Frankfurt," she began slowly. "In the same house as Oskar. In the same bedroom, but not in the same furniture because Oskar was born there 10 years earlier, in 1900."

Elfriede and Oskar, it turns out, were first cousins; her father and his father were the brothers Fischinger and both men worked as pharmacists. "Oskar remembered me as a baby," said Elfriede, "but I only have a recollection of him when he was 19. He wrote a very

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John Canemaker is the author of The Animated Raggedy Ann & Andy, *published by Bobbs-Merrill, and the producer/distributor of the films* Remembering Winsor McCay *and* Otto Messmer and Felix the Cat.

Oskar's family, c. 1922. In the top row, left to right, are Oskar, Joseph, Maria, Otto, and Karl; in the front row are Hans and the Fischinger parents.

idealistic poem in my school album and I still have it."

By 1919 Oskar had been educated with a scientific-technical training. He loved music and had worked as an organ-builder's apprentice. After World War I he became an architectural draftsman and then an engineer in a turbine factory.

In 1920, Oskar attended a literary club in Frankfurt and met Dr. Bernhard Diebold, who was impressed with Fischinger's abstract drawings of the emotional dynamics of Shakespeare's dramas and encouraged the young man to experiment with abstract filmmaking. Fischinger's films, even his experiments, were extraordinary from the first. He tested abstract cut-outs moving in rhythmic patterns and he tried animating representational figures evolving into fantastic shapes lit from below the animation stand; his earliest experimental films were "wax experiments" created on a wax-slicing machine of his invention which allowed successive slices of a block of mixed multi-colored wax to be photographed frame-by-frame.

In August 1922 Fischinger moved to Munich and full-time filmmaking. In order to finance his personal films, he produced with partners several representational cartoons as well as multiple-projection light shows. Financial and personal troubles forced Fischinger to leave Munich; in June 1927 he walked to Berlin carrying his heavy 35mm camera and taking single-frame shots of the German countryside and its farmers and shepherds along the way.

He had trouble finding work at first in Berlin but eventually, in July 1928, he went to work on Fritz Lang's science fiction feature, *Frau Im Mond,* creating special effects animation and rocket models.

Over the next three years Fischinger produced a brilliant series of black and white *Studies* — abstract animation tightly synchronized to jazz and classical music — which played throughout Europe, Japan, and America. These short films were extremely successful and made Oskar famous and a filmmaker in demand.

Meanwhile, back in Gelnhausen, Elfriede attended a lyceum, studied the lute and the piano, learned to read and speak English, and attended two and a half years of art school. Some of her art work was published and exhibited in Berlin, and a group of art students was invited to the exhibition.

"My father gave me a letter and said I should visit this cousin in Berlin," Elfriede recalled. "We already knew Oskar had worked on the Fritz Lang film, but I should see what he was making, what his studio was like because he didn't answer anybody's letters and I should report back and tell his mother what he was doing. So that was how I came to see the 'Wizard of Friederichstrasse' as he was becoming known in the Berlin film industry. If my father had known *what would happen,* he would never have given me that letter, that's for su-u-u-rrre," she laughs.

"Things" happened, as things sometimes do between dewy-eyed, volatile 19-year-old art students and dynamic, volatile 29-year-old wizards. "Within four days, I decided my whole life. I couldn't think Oskar out of my life. Even so after four days I had to go back. They all noticed. They couldn't understand that I liked Berlin so much that I would shed tears over it."

Elfriede corresponded with Oskar through letters he sent to one of her school chums. After some months Oskar phoned Elfriede's father and asked if she could come to work at his studio in Berlin as the demand for the *Studies* was such that he needed a small staff to help prepare them. Permission was granted by Elfriede's unsuspecting parents and the lovers were reunited.

"Today nobody minds any more. But in those days it was outrageous! I think we lived together almost three years and I became pregnant." When their parents found out what had been going on, Elfriede remembered, "That's when the ceiling came down!"

Elfriede consulted a geneticist who told her that marriage between first cousins meant risking the health of their future children. But it was discovered that the odds were in their favor because no chronic diseases could be found in the family genealogy. Oskar and Elfriede were married in a civil ceremony on November 30, 1932, and, for their parents, in a church ceremony in late January the next year. (All of their five children were subsequently born healthy and normal.)

For the little girl from Gelnhausen it was quite an adjustment learning to live with the mercurial Oskar; his reputation was steadily growing, and eventually he would be thought of as one of the major figures in the great European avant garde of the 1920's and early '30's. At times he genuinely enjoyed the domestic joys of *frau, kind* and *heim;* but it was also true that for the most part, for Oskar Fischinger there was his work, which came first and foremost, and then there was everything — and everybody — else.

"There were days when he locked himself in. That usually was weekends when I pestered him. I maybe wanted to go to a lake swimming or to do this or that — you know how wives are! He

would lock himself in. I could do anything but I knew after two or three tries it was absolutely of no avail. So I occupied myself or went by myself, and later with the children, and let Oskar work. He kept that pattern up all throughout his life, even in Hollywood. Sundays he was perfectly happy when we would all go away and leave him alone."

Oskar's regimen was once described by William Moritz as demonstrating a "profound mysticism":

> . . . He lived constantly by some sort of astrological principles — working and abstaining according to moon cycles and other portents. For certain periods he stayed awake only at nights, sitting on hilltops in meditation contemplating the moon. He locked himself away . . . for hours to practice yoga. He moved his bed around periodically to compensate for magnetic currents in the earth, and to realign his own energy flow in various relationships with it. He may have been somewhat psychic . . . he believed in the validity of his visions . . . he studied Ms. Blavatsky's theosophy and Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy and Yogananda's vendanta . . . Because of several tragic experiences with friendly rivals and collaborators . . . Fischinger developed an almost paranoid suspicion of other artists . . . he rarely went to other artists' shows . . . he seems to have been relatively blind to the possible merits of work different from his own . . . He was relatively shy and reserved in personal relationships, but he could also be a brilliant and witty conversationalist among friends . . . he seems to have behaved radically differently to various people and to the same people at different times . . .

No, life with Oskar "was not easy" even from the beginning. Elfriede looked out the taxi's window. "Anybody who is a creative genius, I believe, you cannot tie them down to hours. I kept hours, I got up regularly, but Oskar would sometimes work into the night, all night long and you just had to let him sleep. And sometimes he would be way ahead of the girls who filled in the charcoal on the drawings."

Elfriede also worked filling in the dark surfaces on the animation drawings used in the *Studies* and she supervised the work of three young women and Oskar's brother, Hans. "When I came to stay I started to organize and clean the studio. Berlin Friederichstrasse was all old buildings, infested with bedbugs and stuff. We were on the fourth floor so there was a lot there. I painted and lacquered the wooden floor. I really worked hard because I'm a Virgo. I had to have it just to my liking. I painted the whole studio in soft lilac and yellow hues. Very beautiful. I also switched the filling in of the drawings from charcoal to watercolors because my knuckles got raw from the charcoal dust.

"Sometimes Oskar would get behind and there wouldn't be enough work in the morning for the girls and this was a problem for me. I had to keep them busy, so I would push Oskar, 'Would you please? . . . ' Sometimes he 'Please wouldn't, period!' "

It seems to have been a marriage between a determinedly domestic *hausfrau* and an intuitive mystic, a match not exactly made in *Himmel.* Well, Elfriede loved Oskar and that, to her, was that. She would support him in his work during his best-of-times in Berlin and during the worst-of-times that came soon enough in America. Tenacious and doughty, Elfriede would adjust to Oskar's artistic temperament *and* she would make for him a home and a family, too.

With money coming in from screenings of the *Studies,* Fischinger began experimenting with drawn synthetic sound, and he collaborated with Bela Gaspar on a three-color film and camera. His first color film using this process (named Gasparcolor) was *Kreise (Circles),* completed in December, 1933; this film and his two subsequent color films, *Muratti Marches On* (1934) and *Composition in Blue* (1935) won Fischinger extravagant popular and critical acclaim.

Elfriede participated in the making of each of these films: she painted tempera colors (and helped choose hues) on the 1,000-plus animation drawings in *Kreise;* on the advertising film for Muratti, which featured platoons of marching cigarettes, she inserted straight pins into wooden cigarettes that were stuck into a turntable of kaolin-wax and loose, dyed sawdust and were moved frame-by-frame by Oskar; on *Composition in Blue,* another three-dimensional pixillation film, Elfriede again assisted Oskar and she declared, "It was our real baby together — we worked both on that. Oskar's inventiveness, together with mine — we did a lot!"

Composition in Blue won major prizes at Brussels and Venice in 1935, attracting world-wide attention. One day Elfriede took a phone call from Paris. "It was the Paramount Studio branch. They asked if Oskar was *the* Fischinger who made the cigarette film and *Composition in Blue.* Oskar then got other phone calls from the Berlin Paramount people.

"And then, there was New Year's evening when we were home. And his voice came out of the bathroom, he was sitting in the bathtub. I was busy in the kitchen, we had the doors open. And he said, 'Elfriede, you want to go to Hollywood?' I said, 'Oskar, what kind of joke is that now?' thinking it was a New Year's prank. 'No, no, no. All you have to do is say yes and you'll go to Hollywood.'

"He had a contract. We should read it and should he sign it? We talked another few days. He couldn't read English, not a word. I had learned English in school and I started to translate it and I said, 'It sounds aw-full-ee good!' "

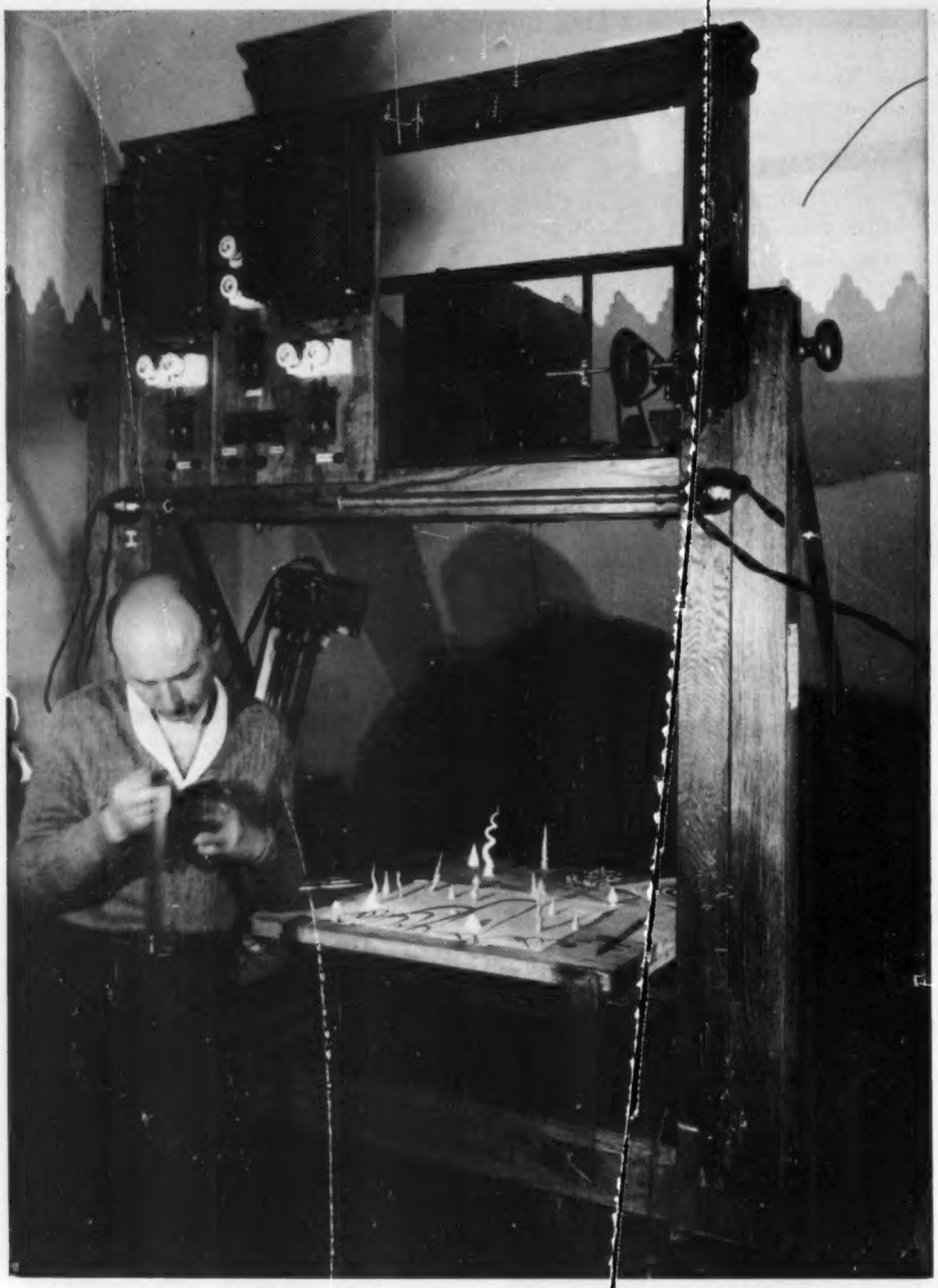
The chance to go to work in America must have seemed very appealing to Fischinger at that time for a couple of reasons: the increasingly powerful Nazi government considered abstract art "degenerate" and life was becoming difficult for all such artists. Secondly, the Fischingers had just suffered a personal tragedy, the accidental death of their second baby son. Oskar's grief was such that he was finding it difficult to work.

Now America beckoned, offering Fischinger what seemed a perfect opportunity to escape problems in Germany and to develop his art to even greater heights; perhaps the vast resources, technical and financial, of the movie industry in Hollywood would allow him to realize his long-cherished dream of creating an abstract feature-length animated film.

Paramount rushed Fischinger out of Berlin within two weeks after he signed the contract. Elfriede remained behind

Oskar Fischinger's films are authorized for sale and rent from Pyramid Films, Box 1048, Santa Monica, Calif. 90406, (213) 828-7577. Most of Fischinger's sound films are available for rental from the Creative Film Society, 7237 Canby, Reseda, Calif., (213) 881-3887, and selected Fischinger films can be rented from Cecile Starr, 50 West 96th Street, New York, N. Y. 10025.

Mrs. Elfriede Fischinger is available as a lecturer with programs of her husband's films. She can be addressed in care of the Fischinger Studio, 8925 Wonderland Park Avenue, Los Angeles, Calif. 90046.



Oskar in Munich, c. 1924.

for three months to liquidate the business; in May 1936 she and her first son, Karl, sailed for America to join Oskar in Hollywood.

The taxi finally reached Kennedy Airport; after checking in, we were amazed to find there was time to drink a coffee before Elfriede's flight left. We listened for a bit to a tape cassette on her recorder of Bill Moritz reviewing a film on his L. A. Pacifica radio show, *Moritz on Film* ("Bill has such a good voice," she remarked).

She made me promise to send her first copies of a special animation issue of *Millimeter* magazine that I was coordinating; it would contain an article on Oskar at Disney's, written by Moritz. The piece was titled, "Fischinger at Disney, or Oskar in the Mousetrap" and it made Elfriede laugh: "That's such a funny title. Oskar always used to joke that *I* was 'the mousetrap' and he was 'the mouse' because I caught him!"

She gave me a quick hug and a kiss. I said I would see a lot of her and Bill when they hit New York in April on their cross-country "grand tour."

She juggled a couple of large carry-on bags while striding with determination down the long, white, red-carpeted hallway, her hair floating above her head like a fuzzy cloud. She didn't look back or wave, but grew smaller and smaller in the distance, then abruptly turned a corner and disappeared.

Excerpts from a February 25, 1977 letter from the author to John Musilli, producer of CBS-TV's Camera Three:

Dear John:

Enclosed please find a special issue of *Millimeter* devoted to animation, which I coordinated and edited. I call to your attention the article on page 25: "Fischinger at Disney, or Oskar in the Mousetrap."

The article covers one brief moment in the long, difficult career of a great film artist and I show it to you because it contains a good capsulization of Fischinger and is an example of what happened to him throughout his life in America until his death in 1967. I think the films and life of Oskar Fischinger would be excellent program material for *Camera Three*.

Fischinger sought to create "statements in pure form" in his abstract films, but he used music as a compositional underpinning, not because he wanted to "illustrate music" (as in *Fantasia*) but because music acted as an aid toward the understanding and acceptance of abstract images . . . If you wish I can arrange for you to see some of Fischinger's films at a private screening at MOMA (Museum of Modern Art). . . In fact, on April 7 MOMA will be featuring an all-Fischinger program, with Mrs. Elfriede Fischinger as guest speaker. Oskar's widow is a friend of mine and she is a bustling, delightful German woman who has been traveling the world since Oskar's death screening her late husband's films, encouraging appreciation of them, and perpetuating the genius of Fischinger — keeping his art alive. She is not wealthy, in fact, has very little money and depends on film sales and rentals and film festivals for most income . . . She should definitely be interviewed on-camera and perhaps a show could be built around her struggle . . .

Let me know how you feel about all this . . .

Excerpts from a March 9, 1977, letter from the author to Elfriede Fischinger:

Dear Elfriede,

Camera Three is a prestigious CBS-TV program of the arts which has in the past presented half-hour documentaries about Hans Richter, George Dunning, the Whitneys, and the Warner Brothers' cartoon directors (which I helped write and was on-camera host for).

Last week I sent to *Camera Three* producer/director John Musilli and writer Stephan Chodorov a copy of the *Millimeter* article and the *Film Culture* piece on Oskar. Today I arranged for them a screening at the Museum of Modern Art of some of Oskar's black and white and color films.

I am pleased to tell you that as a result *Camera Three* is interested in presenting a television program about the life and films of Oskar Fischinger. Not only that, but they

wish to interview you (and probably Bill Moritz) on film during your upcoming visit to New York and insert your comments into the half-hour documentary *hommage*, along with excerpts from the films and still photographs. They will phone you next week to discuss this proposed show.

Elfriede, this would be the first national TV presentation of Oskar and his *oeuvre;* it would be very important in terms of the number of people you will be reaching . . . you must understand, however, there is not a lot of money in this for you. *Camera Three* is a low-budget show, but they will pay you a fee for appearing on-camera and will also pay for the use of excerpts from Oskar's films.

I strongly urge you to cooperate with these gentlemen and help them put this program together . . . If all this works out, you could possibly film your interview in New York during the week of April 4 or after you return through New York on your way back from Halifax the week of April 25 . .. Good luck, Elfriede. This could be a great year for spreading the word about Oskar Fischinger!

April 6. Elfriede and Bill have arrived from California in a small camper truck packed with a mattress, blankets and personal luggage, as well as the usual Fischinger archival materials, e.g., films, photos, drawings, press clippings, and so on. They also brought with them a young friend from L. A. , Larry Cuba, a West Coast independent filmmaker who later that night, after dinner at my place, would screen for us a clip of some digital computer graphics he animated for a new film being released that summer, called *Star Wars.*

Elfriede, Bill, Larry and I had first met the summer before at the Ottawa International Animation Festival. Ottawa presented a marvelous Fischinger retrospective that revealed Oskar's working processes, and Bill and Elfriede charmed the bilingual audience by attempting to comment on the films and *"le process de travail"* in French and English like some marvelously odd vaudeville team. At the final night's awards ceremony, they attended both dressed in long flowing robes, looking like genial potentates from a distant, peaceful world. I liked them immediately and after Canada they passed through New York and had dinner at my apartment where we screened all the films they showed at Ottawa, and more, into the wee hours.

The Ottawa Festival was the first time I had seen a good-sized representation of Fischinger's work and I was profoundly impressed. My first and only exposure to a Fischinger film prior to Ottawa was a chance viewing of

Elfriede in Berlin, 1932; photos by Oskar.

Allegretto, which appeared without warning one evening as "filler" on New York City's educational TV station. "And now," said the female announcer's voice, "a short film from Germany," as perfunctory and inaccurate an introduction to a work of art as one could hope to encounter. I recall being stunned by the four-minute film and when the filmmaker's name was announced after the showing, I dove into anthologies and film books trying to find some information on Fischinger.

Gaps in my, and a lot of people's knowledge about Oskar and his films were filled more than adequately by an exhaustive monograph on the life and career of Oskar Fischinger by William Moritz, published in 1974 in Jonas Mekas' quarterly devoted to avant garde film, *Film Culture.* Moritz's treatise, prepared with the "tireless energy and boundless enthusiasm" of Elfriede, is superbly detailed and has certainly done its part in "snowballing" recent public interest in Fischinger. Here, for example, is Moritz writing on the first film Oskar worked on in the United States, *Allegretto:* "The colors are California colors — the pinks and turquoise and browns of desert sky and sand, the orange of poppies, and the green of avocados. The figures work themselves up into a brilliant and vigorous conclusion, bursting with skyscrapers and kaleidoscopes of stars/diamonds, and every facet of the chic Hollywood design of the thirties. It is a celebration, plain and simple, of the American life style, seen fresh and clean through the exuberant eyes of an immigrant."

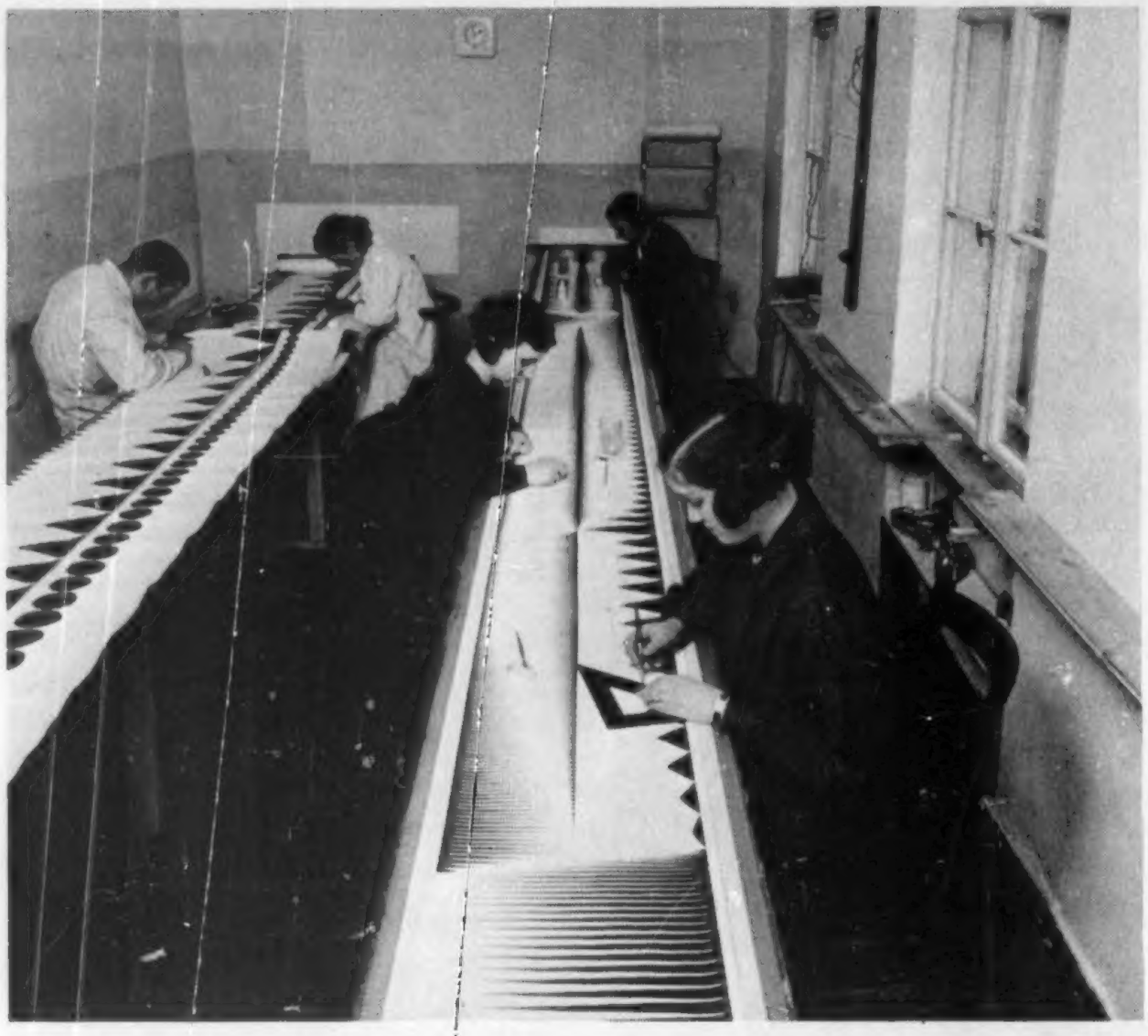
The waiter from the CBS commissary wheeled a cart containing a large pot of coffee, cups and saucers, spoons, sugar and cream, into the large, white screening room. John Musilli and Stephan Chodorov of *Camera Three* were talking and selecting material for the Fischinger TV show with Elfriede and Bill.

Moritz is 35, prematurely bald but with a full, dark mustache and beard; he has worked with Mrs. Fischinger, sorting and studying her late husband's work, since 1970. Moritz explained to the CBS men that *Allegretto* was made at Paramount, where Oskar lasted only six months. The film, as we know it, was never used by the studio, but a black and white version with tacky live-action overlays was substituted for use in *The Big Broadcast of 1937.* Five years later, Fischinger, with the aid of a grant, bought from Paramount all his original cels, soundtracks, and test material, and he re-photographed the short and titled it *Allegretto.*

"Fischinger's independent temperament and language difficulties made it extremely hard for him to work in studio situations," said Moritz in his soothing, deep, reasonable voice.

"We were pretty unhappy in Hollywood, especially Oskar," chirped up Elfriede. "His words were he felt 'like a tree pulled out of the ground and strown on the desert.' "

John and Stephan looked at each other and at me. Unbeknownst to Bill or Elfriede, this meeting was their audition to see if they could be utilized on-



Fischinger's Berlin studio in 1932, with employees working on synthetic sound drawings. Hans and Elfriede Fischinger are at the left-hand table.

camera. Producer Musilli was pleased and later he discussed their broadcasting qualities: "Moritz gives us the facts articulately and Elfriede adds flavor, a sense of history." I was asked to emcee the show, ask the questions and keep the show moving forward through the mountain of material that would have to be covered in 30 minutes.

A taping date was firmed up for May 16 and another meeting was planned to sharpen the program on May 4. Bill and Elfriede happily zipped off to edit films onto large reels for tomorrow's two-part Fischinger show at the Museum of Modern Art.

April 8. On this evening I have arranged for Elfriede and Bill to show a few films to the East Coast branch of ASIFA, an international group of "individuals interested in animation." The MOMA show the night before was nice but not very well attended. Could it be that because of a Fischinger show only last February at New York's Film Forum in Soho (a sell-out for each of its two weekends), Fischinger is suffering from slight over-exposure in New York City?

There was the tiniest of gatherings assembled for the screening/talk in the spacious Magno screening room in the MGM building on Sixth Avenue. "It's cause of Good Friday," remarked a friend, supplying a religious alibi for the no-shows that I would never have thought of. In any case, Bill and Elfriede answered all questions with patience and warmth; they and Larry Cuba left that night in the camper for three weeks of screenings in Canada, from whence Larry returned to the coast. They had collected two parking tickets in three days.

"Movie Journal" by Jonas Mekas in The Soho Weekly News, *May 12, 1977:*

. . . But, ah! one bit of good news. Elfriede Fischinger and Bill Moritz stopped in town. They have been traveling through the country with the work of Oskar Fischinger. I don't have to tell you about Fischinger. His place in the history of cinema has long been established. I should only express my admiration for these two people, Elfriede Fischinger and Bill Moritz, for their immense dedication to Oskar Fischinger's work. We should be grateful to them for restoring and preserving Fischinger's work, and now, making it available to us all . . .

May 3. Back from Canada, Elfriede and Bill arrived in town in time for dinner at my place and the three of us rode in the cab of their cluttered camper down to Wooster Street in Soho for their show at Jonas Mekas' Anthology Film Archives. Mekas, who has been referred to as the patron saint of the underground cinema, has insisted on a screening of the *complete* Fischinger filmography *in chronological order:* tonight we will see *all* the black and white films and tomorrow *all* the color. A rare and glorious feast!

But there were so few partakers of the banquet. A light spring rain and gloomy skies underscored Mekas' mood. He watched an audience of 10 meander in slowly and he seriously considered canceling the show. A few more people arrived, friends of Elfriede and Bill. Joseph Kennedy, with whom I share my apartment, showed up as did Mike Sporn, a member on the board of ASIFA East with me, and a Fischinger fan. There were a handful of independent filmmakers, but no members of New York's independent-animators community showed up. (Disinterest? Laziness? Overfamiliarity with the films? Perhaps. For me, Fischinger is like the sun when it sets — I can find new and ever more beautiful things in it everytime I watch.)

It turned out to be a happy, very informal screening, with Bill and Elfriede calling out comments in the dark between films or during the silent films. Mekas sat with his wife and child, a curly-haired little girl who burbled happily and made her own comments throughout. There were a few questions after, but the long show had left everyone spiritually sated but physically tired and hungry, so the queries were short and soon everyone left.

Joe and I asked Bill and Elfriede if they would need a place to stay, adding that they would be more than welcome to share our large apartment on the upper West Side for the duration. "No, thank you," said Elfriede, "we be all right. We are sleeping in the camper with the art. It is parked right in front of the Anthology and we'll be quite safe in Soho."

Poor California innocents. I said that if they changed their minds they shouldn't hesitate to call me.

May 4. The call came early the next morning. "Could we take you up on your offer, Chawn?" said Elfriede.

It seems Soho is not any safer than any other part of Manhattan. Around two that morning some opportunistic miscreant broke into the cab of the little camper and was about to steal everything in sight when the voice of the valkyrie was heard coming from the back of the vehicle, screaming inflammatory epithets. Having routed the rascal, Elfriede and Bill stood uneasy guard

over Oskar's legacy until dawn — a pair of weaponless gypsy sentries.

Outside my apartment house Joe, Elfriede, Bill and I formed a combination assembly-line/relay-race to empty the camper parked in front of the building and to drag its contents into the lobby, up in the elevator, down a hallway and finally into my apartment, which was fated to be in disarray for the next two weeks. Elfriede would occupy a convertible sofa in the living room and Bill settled on a small cot in my studio.

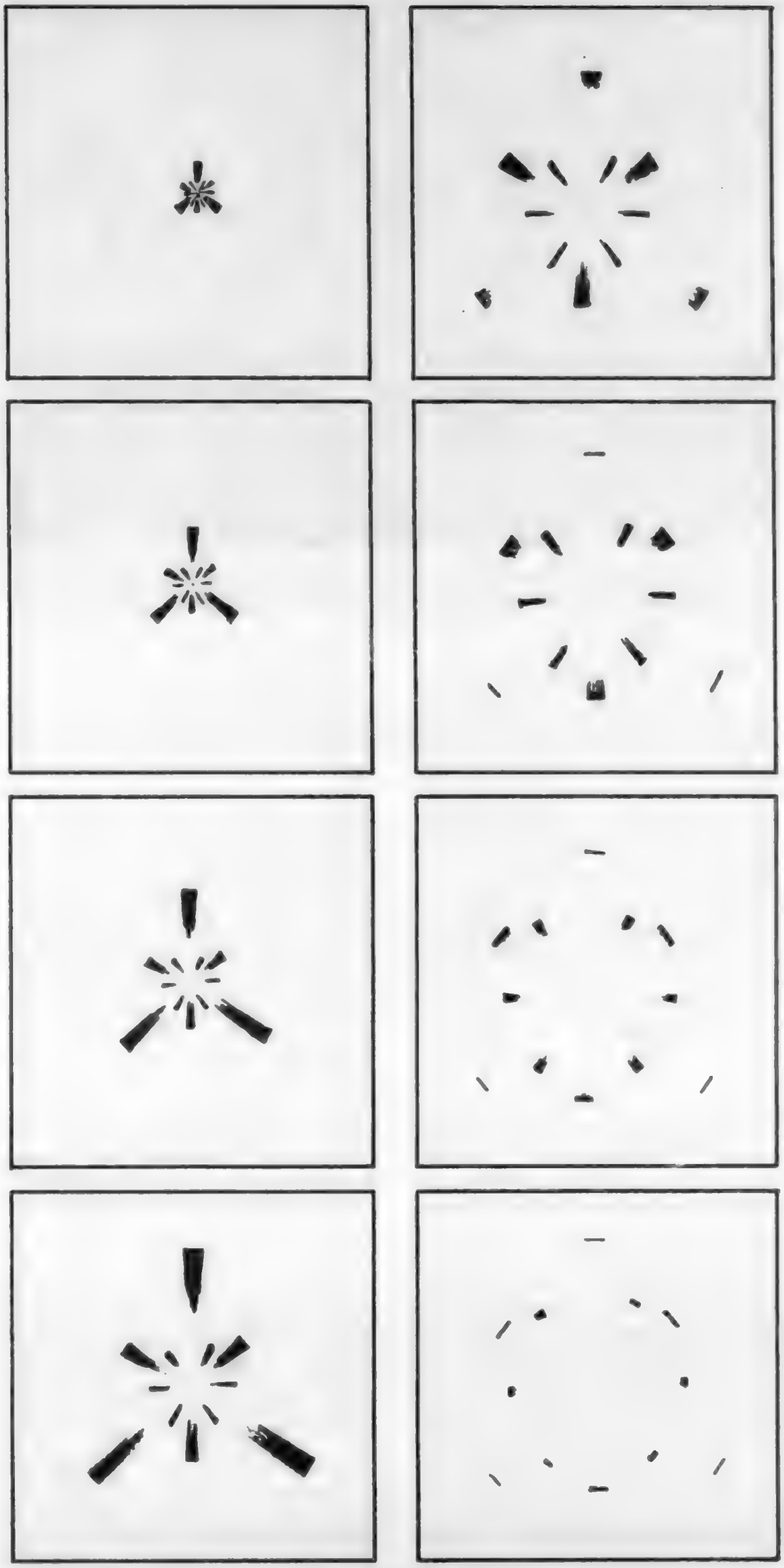
At our meeting at CBS later that morning, John Musilli unveiled a blueprint of "The Fischinger Set." The area where our taped interviews would take place consisted of an interlocking platform and half a cyclorama painted in the primary hues and circular design of Oskar's *Kreise*. Delighted by the classy treatment *Camera Three* was giving the show, Elfriede asked for the blueprint "to add to the Archives."

"I had a feeling you might want it for that," smiled John as he handed it over. Elfriede insisted on certain things being written into her contract, money things and receiving a cassette tape of the entire show "for the Archives." A running gag at the taping would be that anything that wasn't tied down on the set would end up in the Fischinger Archives.

The screening of the color films that evening went well; there were a few more people attending besides the Fischinger loyalists. After the show, over burgers and beer at the Broom Street Bar, Elfriede and Bill complained about the parking situation in New York (they now had five tickets!) and then they began to pick up on an old argument about illustrated sound and whether it is important that Oskar was or was not the first to create synthetic soundtracks. Bill said being first was not important and Elfriede disagreed loudly.

The tensions of traveling together for such a long period and working so closely with each other were beginning to surface between Bill and Elfriede. They know each other's sensitive areas well and this tour, with its constant pressures for preparation and performance, had brought their strengths, weaknesses and vulnerabilities into sharp relief.

Oskar Fischinger harbored a silent resentment against certain filmmakers who he felt duplicated or laid claim to his ideas and film techniques. Bill knows these angry feelings have been trans-



Successive frames from Study No. 7 *by Oskar Fischinger.*

Photo by Jules Engel

At the Ottawa animation festival, 1976, left to right: John Canemaker, William Moritz, Elfriede Fischinger, Louise Beaudet of La Cinematheque Quebecoise, and Irene Maryan (Mrs. Jules Engel).

ferred to Fischinger's widow through osmosis and to drop certain names into a conversation can provoke a violent reaction from her. Names such as Stokowski, Bute, Richter and Alexeieff, among others, can bring forth from Elfriede wails of "They done him wrong!" Bill knows this and sometimes uses the names to play her like a volcanic calliope.

Elfriede, on the other hand, is extremely jealous of sharing Bill's time with anyone not having a direct interest in or connection with Oskar's work. "Bill Moritz is perfect," she once told me, recalling her thoughts at their first meetings. "He is a filmmaker, a scholar, he can write beautifully, he can speak and read German, and he loves Oskar's work. He is perfect to help me with the Archives." In some ways, small ways, Bill *reminds* her of Oskar, temperamentally and physically, an opinion, Bill claims, that is shared by several people who knew Oskar. "It's very strange," he said, "but other people besides Elfriede have remarked that there is some aura of Oskar about me. Somehow this provokes possessive feelings in Elfriede."

Several times during their stay, Bill dropped us off at my apartment, went to park the camper and did not return until the next morning, sometimes an hour before their appointments. Elfriede, who "worried all night," would be fit to be tied. She runs a tight ship. "I do not mind Bill's freedom," she exclaimed, "when we are home in L. A., but not when we are on tour!" Bill's laid-back "everything's o.k." (to quote from one of his poems) attitude complements Elfriede's apprehension of missed appointments and screwed-up schedules, an often overanxious imagining of impending disaster that can wind her up tighter than an Austrian cuckoo clock.

Upon Bill's early morning return, Elfriede's anger would manifest itself in a furious pattering around the living room, gathering up films and other material necessary for the appointment, muttering all the while to herself and to Bill about how unfair it is that the total responsibility for these things should fall onto her shoulders and not be shared by Bill.

Moritz knew enough not to argue the point at the moment and he gamely assisted her in her search through piles of material. If Bill doesn't challenge her anger, it most often winds down.

But sometimes it has to be physically worked off. One morning, after a tense scene upstairs, I accompanied them down in the elevator and watched as they walked stiffly toward the camper parked a couple of blocks away. A few minutes later, as I waited for the mailman, I noticed Bill and Elfriede walking at a fast clip back toward me. Elfriede, in the lead, marched with an emphatic military step, arms swinging in tandem to a silent beat, an angry cast to her face. As they approached me, I was about to ask if they had forgotten a film or something, but they strode by, Elfriede in a hot fury looking straight ahead, Bill glancing over to me with his mild "everything's o.k." smile. When they reached the middle of the block, Elfriede suddenly turned, marched past me again with Bill following, and the two of them continued on in the direction of the camper, the wrathful spirits of the spleen having been exorcised, I assumed.

May 5. Bill Moritz's show at the Anthology. Generous soul that he is, he started the long program by showing four films by James Whitney, one of which, *Wu Ming,* lasts almost half an hour and ends with a screen-sized dot slowly receding into infinity. Mekas later declared this film "looks like it's made by gods." Moritz also showed *Tanka,* by another West Coast filmmaker, David Lebrun, a rapid collage of an Indian painting shot in triple-frames. Mekas' expression after this film (which *I* enjoyed) seemed to say he did *not* feel it was made by gods.

We don't know what he thought of Bill's work because he left before it began; so did a few in the already sparse audience, including a pair of gum-cracking teenaged girls who, wandering the East Village for something to do, were enticed by Bill Moritz standing at the door of the Anthology promising "new and different films."

Their loss. They missed what is an exotic mind-trip for most of us Eastern filmmakers: the special sensibility of the West Coast film artist. Bill Moritz wants to establish "a new rapport between filmmaker, imagery, and viewer." To do this, he makes viewing his films a very personal experience. He introduces each film in person and reads selections of his poetry; he projects some films with two or three projectors running simultaneously; he burns incense, rings Tibetan bells and makes noises from different parts of the theatre; for one film he ran back and forth in front of the projector with Fourth of July sparklers in both hands.

If his poems have a libidinous drive behind them, (e.g., "I Met a Former Lover at a Tap Dance Class," "Homoh Love Poem for Jasper"), many of his films possess a spirituality, clear and lyrical, (e.g., *Jude, Haiku for Buddah-John*), and both his poems and his films share his sense of cosmic humor. While Bill Moritz stretches "the expressive capacity of film and the perceptual vocabulary of the viewer," he is smiling.

May 14. We had dinner together this Saturday night and went to see former animator Walerian Borowczyk's erotic spoof, *The Beast.*

May 15. We visited the Nicholas Roerich Museum on West 107th Street to see the unique and mysterious paintings of Himalayan landscapes by spiritualist/philosopher/painter Roerich (1874-1947). Late that afternoon, Joe and I rode in the back of the camper, staring out the side windows and the ceiling-opening all the way down Broadway to Jonas Mekas' huge loft. Bill had prepared a dinner at my place which we carried downtown in pots, kettles and jars. There was a mixture of Indonesian/Balinese textures, including mixed salad with peanut butter sauce, banana yogurt with dill, spicy chicken, and so on. There was lots of wine and Mekas tolerated with amusement my watching *The Wonderful World of Disney* on my portable TV (which I brought along to catch a show on cartoon villains). He squeezed off a few frames on his Bolex, as is his custom, to preserve a record of the evening.

May 16. The morning of the taping of the Fischinger show at CBS, Bill left the apartment early for the studio to transfer to tape the films we selected, clips of which would be edited into the final program. Elfriede was relaxed but worried about what she should wear on the air. She was eating a hard-boiled egg out of an improvised egg-cup — one of my whiskey shot glasses — while sitting on the edge of the sofa in her long white cotton nightgown, surrounded by orderly piles of the usual film cans, paintings, photos, etc. A tiny framed photo of the young Oskar Fischinger (which she always carries with her and displays when traveling) sat propped against a window sill.

We started to talk about her and Oskar's life in America at the same conversational point where we had left off five months before. "It was quite a hassle," she said. "We couldn't take any money with us from Berlin. Paramount said we weren't supposed to tell the immigration office we had a contract, which made me suspicious. We had to come in as visitors, for a year, then we got an extension, then they 'finagled' for a lot of money and we had to go to Mexico, re-enter the States as Mexican citizens."

She laughs, but then moans, "We were so frustrated and so misunderstood. Oh, I can't tell you! And I got

Photo by Linda Holiday

On the "Fischinger set" for CBS-TV's Camera Three, *May 16, 1977, Stephan Chodorov (back to camera) speaks with (from left) John Canemaker, William Moritz, and Elfriede Fischinger.*

pregnant right away again. Oskar was unhappy at Paramount. That lasted only half a year. A contract with MGM was slow in coming due to Oskar's immigration problems, but it finally came and he created *An Optical Poem,* a fine work which played with first-run features." Fischinger's contract with MGM was not picked up because new departmental management preferred representational cartoons, e.g., Tom and Jerry, to abstract animation.

Disillusioned by his life in the New World, depressed by the lack of outlets for his work in Hollywood, Fischinger drove alone to New York early in 1938 hoping to find backing for films he was planning. He was surprised to find himself treated as a major artist in New York; his films were screened, his paintings exhibited; he was wined and dined by important artists and critics, and he obtained the promise of financial assistance from the beautiful and eccentric curator of the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, Hilla Rebay.

Elfriede took care of the babies and started working at home knitting sweaters and sewing clothes for members of the film colony, such as Bette Davis. Oskar returned to Hollywood late in 1938 only when his agent got him a contract with the Disney Studio to work on *Fantasia.*

Fischinger had discussed his idea of an abstract animated feature using classical music with Leopold Stokowski when they were both at Paramount. Elfriede's opinion of Stokowski? "Pretty boy. Curly hair, very good-looking in a way. Imposing figure. Very friendly, very nice. I wasn't worried at first, but I told Oskar don't tell everybody your idea, especially not Stokowski. But actually he had already said it to newspapers in Germany that he wished to make a concert feature." Stokowski took the idea to Disney and Oskar was hired to work on the "Toccata and Fugue" section as a "special effects animator." He lasted nine months before he quit in disgust over his inability to put his ideas across and the impossibility of making artistic decisions without going through committees and studio politics.

After Disney, Fischinger had had it with studios and working for other people; with a Guggenheim grant he began work on *American March,* a short finished in mid-1941. He hired three girls and his wife to work on the film and Elfriede recalled, "Oskar put me on the employment roll and I got Social Security which does me some good now." She also worked two years (1946-47) at a firm called California Accessories, "designing pocketbooks, weaving belts, shoes, caps on heads"; next she worked at a similar company for four years on the Sunset Strip.

The grants from the Guggenheim stopped after Fischinger and Hilla Rebay argued over the artistic merits of his last great film, *Motion Painting I,* completed

in 1947, 20 years before he died. "For the last 20 years of his life," Moritz once wrote, "Fischinger had to content himself with endless unfulfilled projects, with his paintings (which involved him in dozens of gallery shows), and with a home light-show instrument, the Lumigraph, which he invented in the early '50's but for which he never found commercial distribution."

"Even when we had momentarily big sums," said Elfriede, "from TV spots he animated, we had debts piled up. We had to pay bills and we were right away down on the bottom again. The children sold papers or babysat for extra income while going to school or universities. Oskar killed any interest or desire they had to become artists.

"It was always touch and go. He became a painter because he had more time on his hands. He didn't make films because of the lack of money and the lack of getting to a screen. Earlier in Berlin there was a club of independent filmmakers that stretched to theaters all over the whole of Europe. He had access to a screen, his films got to the public. But in Hollywood, except for art schools and museums, you couldn't get on the theater screen. It was occupied by the cartoon."

Fischinger's spirit deserted him and then his health went. "I think he ruined his health when he made *Motion Painting,*" Elfriede said. "He sat there, day in, day out, smoking those cigars in a room with no air, painting one stroke and then leaning back to take one frame with the camera. He did that for months."

He began to have mild strokes that left him paralyzed for days, then more serious ones. Finally, a major heart attack ended his life. "I wish I had never put him in the hospital," exclaimed Elfriede. "I think the hospital killed him! They wouldn't let him walk. The second day I came he told me they wouldn't let him go by himself to the toilet. He also had diabetes.

"He wouldn't stick to doctor's orders anyway. He had a very bad toe that looked gangrenous. Our doctor was also a friend who collected his paintings so I could talk very freely to him. Oskar just wouldn't do what was required. He got cold feet so he put on plastic shoes. Plastic house shoes! If the air can't get at . . ." She shook her head.

"At home he wouldn't stay off his feet when the doctor said he had to lay down. So the doctor said, 'Take it easy. Have eight days in the hospital.' It sounded as if nothing would happen, that he would be back home in eight days. My daughter took me down to the hospital every morning at eight and back home at six every day.

"I saw him have two strokes . . . I'm sorry. I can't talk about it. It's pretty horrible to watch it and you cannot do nothing about it." Her voice trailed off and she looked as if she were going to cry.

Later, as we walked across the courtyard of Lincoln Center, taking a short cut to CBS, I worried that Elfriede's mood would not be conducive to appearing on a network television taping in about an hour. And I blamed myself for asking her those questions at this particular time.

But I reckoned without Elfriede's feisty resilience. As we strode down 57th Street, she talked about getting started again after Oskar's death.

"At first I didn't want to do nothing. Sometimes I even have those spells now. I just sometimes get to the point and tell myself *okay*! If the world doesn't want to, why should I force it on the world, right? But then there were people who pushed me, like Guy Cote from Cinematheque Canadien, who right away wrote me letters saying it should be preserved. He said he had money for the Animation Festival at Expo '67 in Canada, so I shipped some films out. It did a good thing for me. Oskar was represented in the history of animation exhibit. It made my daughter say you come with us — my daughter wanted to go to the Expo by car with a friend and take me. So I went and I saw all the country and it got me away from home, from everything. We camped out. I love to rough it! And I started to think anew and I started to think about a new life.

"This Expo started the ball rolling. I heard from all of the Cinematheques. It just went on and on and on ever since."

Bill and I were sitting on the "Fischinger set" under the lights as technicians adjusted cameras and mikes. Elfriede finally appeared from "make-up" having decided to dress in a colorfully striped, voluminous robe. She looked dignified, peaceful — beautiful.

The stage manager signaled me. We were taping and I introduced the show and the two guests. The first question was to go to Elfriede, as agreed upon in the pre-show meetings. I knew her answer would set the mood for the rest of the show.

"Mrs. Fischinger," I said, "tell us when and where Oskar Fischinger was born, a little about his background, and how he became interested in film."

Elfriede, completely relaxed and self-possessed, looked at me with level eyes and smiled. "Of course," she began. "He was born in Gelnhausen, which is near Frankfurt, Germany, in 1900 . . ."

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Bill Moritz and Elfriede Fischinger, by John Canemaker.

HUEMERESQUE
A New Column By Dick Huemer

Dick Huemer worked in animation studios for more than 50 years, starting in 1916, and was story director for such Disney features as Fantasia *and* Dumbo.

©Walt Disney Productions

Ted Sears in the 1930's.

Today I'm going to regale your tender ears with a little gab about a certain fabulous character who once happily graced our beloved profession — our very own Till Eulenspiegel. You all know about Till, of course: always the *mot juste* on tap — ever some outrageously amusing prank hatching in his fertile brain. Well, our Till was called Ted, and his last name was not Eulenspiegel, but Sears. That's right, Ted Sears is he of whom I speak. And his comical inventions were, at least to my mind, far superior to anything old Till ever cooked up.

Take for instance the time at the old Mutt and Jeff studio when Ted *un*stuffed the studio health-nut's stuffed dates and filled several with Bull Durham tobacco, which the poor goof happily devoured with self-righteous gusto. Nor did the nicotine-impregnated fruit appear to have the slightest effect, either in taste or in digestion. Which goes to prove something or other about applied nutrition. I tell you it was a kick.

Most of Ted's efforts at socially applied humor expended themselves in vocal expression. However, he didn't tell jokes as such. It was his comments that were so killingly appropriate. And he scattered them around like there was no tomorrow. I sat opposite him at the same old Mutt and Jeff studio back in 1918, and believe me, it was better than a night at the Palace. It's kind of a dirty trick telling you all this about Ted without slipping in a few samples of his sensational line. But alas, galloping senility has erased all from my memory. Perhaps there are those still around who have not been too blighted by advancing years and who, if you care to pursue the subject further, might fill you in with some sparkling items.

However, if I have given you the impression that all Ted did, while he was supposedly being gainfully employed, was to be an entertaining buddy, I sure didn't mean it. No, indeed. At a story meeting Ted could bandy gags and throw out, seemingly just casually, story ideas with the best of them. And I mean — the *best*. And don't think the Grand Panjandrum himself (that's Walter Elias) didn't appreciate him. Toward the end, when poor Ted was in serious physical decline, Walt bent over backwards to keep him employed and happy. To show you how much Walt thought of Ted, back when we all were still young and frisky, he set Ted up in the biggest office on the lot (outside of his), all private, with a secretary and his very own water cooler, even, and figuratively handed him a hat which might have read: HEAD OF STORY DEPARTMENT. Ted never went near it. Nor did he ever let it appear that he considered himself any more than just one of the boys. It was the neatest side-stepping you ever saw. And the beauty of it was that he did it without offending Walt, and that was going some, let me tell you.

And that's not the only time he ducked fame and/or success, as reckoned by most. You see, Ted and Milt Gross were great pals back in New York, and this was at the time when Milt was being very successful at the New York *World* — some of you might have heard of the "Nize Baby" books and the features of Milt's that swept the boards about that time.

Anyway, through Milt, Ted met the editor of the *World*, who was so enthralled with Ted's patter that he offered him his very own column, no strings attached. Think of it! Did Ted jump at the chance to do what every eager scribbler in the whole damn universe lay dreaming of at night? You're so right. He avoided that plum like it was spiked with ant poison. And nobody could budge him. That was our Ted. Like Ferdinand, he just wanted to live quietly and make the funny. I still think he would have been sensational. It was a great loss to journalism, I'm that convinced.

Well, so much for what Ted *didn't* do, and on now to the positive side. From the time he got to Disney's he was in on every cartoon story — including, of course, the features. He was prominent and prolific on most of them. From *Snow White* to the "True Life Adventures," you'll see the name of Ted Sears on the credits.

But the real contribution that Ted made, not only to Disney but to the entire animation industry as well — and oddly enough also to live-action pictures — is something we now take completely for granted. Would you like to know the name of the genius who invented the concept of the storyboard? Most think that it was Walt Disney's idea and there are those who claim the honor for Webb Smith. But take it from me, an unimpeachable source, it was Ted Sears who first thought of it and submitted it to the Fleischers back in New York when

he was working for them in the late '20's. According to how I heard it, they didn't go for it. So later when Ted made the switch to Disney and again unveiled the idea to *that* perfectionist, his nibs, seeing in the concept still another way to improve the product, promptly ordered it done. The rest, to uncoin a phrase, is no mystery.

I have here several notes written by Ted Sears, which to my simple mind are classics, ribbing one Cy Young, who had been made head of the Effects (EFX) Department (which in itself was a radical departure for those days). I remember when I came to Disney's, we animators were still making our own smoke and waves or whatever incidental non-personality animation was required in our scenes. Cy did a marvelous job, and he took his position very seriously — always promoting the further use of his department, as you shall see.

Now it's important to the appreciation of these unsolicited notes of Ted's that you understand that Cy Young was a noble Son of Han — i.e., a full-fledged Celestial — that is, Chinese. And at that time the only one who had made it into our profession, as I like to call it.

These notes of Ted's were circulated around the studio from time to time, whenever Ted had the urge. They purportedly came from Cy himself and were merely Ted's exaggerated comic impression of how Cy might approach a given situation. Understand, Cy Young was perfectly literate, which made the rib inoffensive.

This one concerns Cy's critique and impression of a trip Walt made us all take one Saturday to the Wilshire Ebell Theatre to see a crummy half-assed WPA production of *Peter Pan* — live action, of course. It was part of Walt's program to familiarize the staff with *PP*, which was to be our next feature production. I hope you youngsters can figure out most of Ted's sly allusions concerning what happened so long before your time. If not, have some other superannuated old cove explain it to you. Anyway, here it is:

Good god what fun resulting from Sat. p.m. being spent at Evil Theatre, to witness performing of childsplay Petapan from the immortal pen of Late jas. Barry. Oh! did we laughing — oh! and how! First scenes begin in crazy house. Nurse are a big animal poorley stuffed on all four, eating medicine slyly prepare by father of little Windy. From then on is madhouse of one disconnecting episodes after each other. Additional idiots are big brother who should be enrolled in straightsjacket by all means wearing a silk hat, Small sister is named Patricks, causing further confusion — but England is funny race of people, so what in hell, anyway.

Possible for cartoons.

1. Tinkabells (only female fairy) could be done much better in EFX department very reasonable, getting rid of jumps and flicka.

We should avoid troubling the censorships by keeping more boys and girls out of same bed because of narrow minded American publics. Most entertainment is contain in hit song of the Pirus "A fast delay, me-too", giving big chance for new words and lyrics by Lee Washington.

Next act, sorry to say is most entirely lost because of paper monoplane being sailed by Roy Disney, Jr., blocking right eye. Best character for model departments is unseen alligator, unable to digest alarm watch going ticktock offstage to scare the daylight from villainous Hooks. When Piruss get killed ova board — most glorious fake ever perpetrate on public!

Not one water effecs! Not once! Not even fool a Japan audience with this swindle — by crocky!

2. Big climb-axe is happen when all rowdy kids in audience must applause, otherwise Tinkle Bell is going out like a light in very poor animation. Crap hands is coming from all over house. This shows heart is in the right place even on some American brat (no personal offence).

To end by finally summing up the conclusions, is beyond the shadows of a doubt that for show entered by Anna Oakleys ticket was well worth double the price. More power to the Evil Wilshire Theatre!

p.s. coo be betta

Eh? How's that? You *don't get it?* Well, forget it. We all thought it was funny!

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Members of the Disney studio's staff gathered for this photo late in the fall of 1932, after Walt had won an Academy Award for Mickey Mouse. Kneeling in front are (from left) Floyd Gottfredson (artist for the Mickey Mouse newspaper strip) and animators Les Clark and Johnny Cannon. Standing in the first row are director Burt Gillett, animator Jack King, Ted Sears, Roy Disney, Walt Disney, animators Norm Ferguson and Dick Lundy, and background artist Emil Flohri. In the second row are animator Clyde (Gerry) Geronimi, musicians Bert Lewis (partially obscured behind Roy Disney) and Frank Churchill, animator Ben Sharpsteen (partially obscured behind Ferguson), and Albert Hurter, whose important job is difficult to describe, except to say that he provided inspirational sketches for Disney cartoons. In the third row are director Wilfred Jackson (partially obscured behind Geronimi), animator Tom Palmer, gagman Webb Smith, and animator Gilles (Frenchy) de Tremaudan. In the back row are layout man Hugh Hennesy, animator (later director) David Hand, and layout man Charles Philippi. (Jackson, who identified many of the people in this photo, is wearing Tom Palmer's glasses.)

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Phil Harris and Little John, his alter ego in Robin Hood *(1973). Harris, whose voice has been used in three of the last four Disney animated features, is the most striking example of the Disney studio's current reliance on "star" voices.*

The Moving Drawing Speaks

For the 50th Anniversary of Cartoons with Sound, An Honor Roll of Animation's Principal Voices

Compiled by GRAHAM WEBB and HAMES WARE and written by MIKE BARRIER

In one sense, cartoon characters' voices are of minor importance in the production of an animated film. Typically, the actors who do the voices are in and out of the recording studio in a few hours, and once their voices are recorded, the actors' role in the production of the films is over. Not for them the weeks of labor required of directors, story men, animators, and so on.

But, in another sense, there is almost nothing else as important as the voices. Bugs Bunny, Popeye, Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, Porky Pig — all of these characters live in our minds as voices as well as images. A character can be brought to life through drawings alone (as witness Tom and Jerry, and the Coyote and the Road Runner), but if he has a voice, it must be distinctive. If a character's voice is forgettable, the odds are that he will be, too.

The importance of voices seems obvious today — and even overstressed — but for many years, voice artists received little recognition. This was natural when sound cartoons were first being made, because the voices were nothing but assorted grunts, yelps, and squeaks. For the first few years of sound cartoons, voices were typically recorded simultaneously with the music and the sound effects, in a single "take," after the cartoon had been animated, inked and painted. Extensive dialogue was impractical under such conditions, and the voices were often provided by members of the cartoon studios' staffs. Various members of the Disney staff provided Mickey Mouse's voice before Walt Disney settled into doing it, and the voice for Bosko was that of Carman Maxwell, for many years the production manager at the Harman-Ising and MGM cartoon studios.

Gradually, recording techniques improved and "pre-recording" of voices became the rule (although "post-recording" remained standard in the East Coast studios throughout the

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Clarence Nash (1940).

'30's). Some cartoon directors grasped the potential for characterization in voices, and distinctive voices began to emerge. Some "outside" voices had been used almost from the start — for example, the young actress Rochelle Hudson was the voice of Honey in the Bosko series — but their use had risen dramatically by the mid-'30's. Although some talents were still being found within the studios — Jack Mercer, the voice of Popeye, is an outstanding example — more and more voices were provided by character actors from live-action films, such as Billy Bletcher, and, significantly, by radio actors and announcers — people who knew (because their jobs depended on it) how to sell a character through the voice alone.

The watershed year was 1937. Disney's *Snow White* was released that year. The voices had been chosen with exceptional care, so that they fitted each character naturally. *Snow White* demonstrated that the right voices, when matched with animation of high quality, could sustain an illusion of reality for the length of a feature picture. Moreover, the identities of the voices were not concealed. (Only a couple of years before, a lengthy article in a popular magazine about Donald Duck and his voice had included no mention of Clarence Nash.)

Just as important, 1937 was the year that Mel Blanc's voice began to be heard in the Warner Bros. cartoons. Blanc's was a radio voice — immensely flexible, and vivid in each of his dozens of characterizations. He could give the Warner directors vocal caricatures that complemented the extravagance on the screen. Within a few years, Blanc was providing the voices for virtually all of the major Warner characters. In 1944, when the Warner screen credits were expanded, he began receiving credit for "voice characterization." Many of the other Warner regulars (such as Arthur Q. Bryan, the voice of Elmer Fudd) were never accorded that honor. In fact, for years the only other cartoon voice to be so recognized was Jim Backus, the voice of Mister Magoo in that UPA series.

Backus was basically a one-voice actor, just as Nash and Mercer were (both men provided incidental voices of many kinds, but they were closely identified only with Donald Duck and Popeye, respectively). Blanc, by contrast, gave a distinctive voice to each character in a large menagerie. Other actors, such as Frank Graham and later Daws Butler, could rival Blanc's flexibility, but they did not have the good fortune to speak for so many continuing characters in theatrical cartoons.

For 15 or 20 years, Blanc and the Disney features set high standards for voice work. Unfortunately, those standards have not been maintained in the '60's and '70's. In Blanc's case, his voice has been somewhat coarsened by age and by the lingering effects of a terrible automobile accident in 1961. The decline of theatrical cartoons, and the rise of TV cartoons, has meant that no one could really ascend to Blanc's place as the preeminent voice artist.

TV cartoons would seem to be fertile ground for voice artists, because they lean so heavily on non-stop gab; it is the voices, rather than the drawings, that define characters. But, in fact, the voices for TV cartoons suffer precisely because they have to carry so much of the load. Voice artists have to speak for poorly conceived characters, and the dialogue is frequently recorded with carelessness and haste. An experienced performer like Butler can surmount these obstacles and give some individual flavor to even the dimmest character, but, more often, the voices for cartoon characters are strained and artificial — voice distortions, rather than voice characterizations. Even Blanc's best TV work is lackluster when compared with his Warner work; he needed the support of the Warner directors, stories, and characters to be at his best.

The voices for the Disney features have also undergone a major change. The Disney studio started giving screen credit for voice work after World War II, and went one step further in 1951, when it tailored the personalities of the Mad Hatter and March Hare in *Alice in Wonderland* to fit the voices of Ed Wynn and Jerry Colonna. However, it was not until *Jungle Book* in 1967 that Disney's began to exploit "star voices" in earnest. Since then, the studio has seemed to wrap each character around its voice, rather than choosing voices to fit characters that have already been developed in the story department. Shere Khan (in *Jungle Book*) is thus an elegant caricature of George Sanders, and Sir Hiss (in *Robin Hood*) a diminished reflection of Terry-Thomas. In some cases, the use of star voices has resulted in rich and satisfying characterizations (as with Sanders' tiger), but more often, the result has been an unfortunate resemblance between the Disney features and the TV situation comedies from which most of their voice artists are now drawn.

This, then, is the present sad state of affairs. There are still many individual voice artists who are performing at a high level, but there is no series of cartoons — short subjects, features, TV cartoons — in which voices are used to best advantage. It is rare that a voice seems to be the natural expression of a living creature.

Considering the present low estate of the art, now is as good a time as any to recall the great cartoon voices of the past. Graham Webb, an English cartoon buff, and Hames Ware, an American with an ear for voices, have spent years compiling as complete as possible a listing of voice credits for the Hollywood cartoons of the "golden age," and the results are published here. This listing, as extensive as it is, is far from complete, and there are almost certainly some errors as well — a reflection of the lack of adequate records in this area. Additions and corrections would be welcome.

Clarence Nash

Clarence Nash, like Daws Butler, Jack Mercer, and many others who have become well known for cartoon voices, had stage experience in his youth. He did birdcalls and played the mandolin on the Chautauqua-and-Lyceum circuit in the 1920's. Jobless at the beginning of the Depression, he and his wife took a freighter from San Francisco to Los Angeles, arriving there on May 12, 1930. Through an acquaintance he had made in San Francisco, he made an appearance on a Los Angeles radio show, The Merrymakers, *and he put his talent as a bird imitator to work in another job, as he explained in an interview with Milt Gray on February 18, 1978. M. B.*

Nash: I drove a miniature milk wagon with a team of, not ponies, but miniature horses. I'd have little gimmicks to give to the kiddies — little tape measures, and other things. It said on the wagon, the Adohr Milk Company and "Whistling Clarence, the Adohr Bird Man." I could imitate a lot of birds; I've lost my canary bird, I guess from having dental work, and my baby chickens, baby ducks, baby turkeys aren't so hot any more. It's a teeth and tongue whistle; the other is pucker.

They made a circular advertising my work, and they'd send it out to various clubs. I'd entertain at lodges, and clubs. Quite often, people said, "You ought to meet Walt Disney." Well, I couldn't afford to go to shows; I'd never heard of Mickey Mouse.

Finally, after two years of working for Adohr, we had a letter from some friends in San Francisco. "We haven't heard you on radio lately." I went right down to KHJ, and I said, "I'd like to go on *The Merrymakers* again, and I don't want any money, I just want to go on." So they were glad to have me on their show.

The story is, Walt had a late story meeting, and just before the meeting was to close, somebody just happened to turn a radio on, softly, and I was on. He turned it off, but then Walt said, "Hey, that man sounds like a duck, let's hear the rest of that."

Two days after that broadcast, I'm driving on Hyperion Boulevard, where the old studio was; I had this truck with the miniature milk wagon, and the little horses, coming into Glendale. I just happened to look across the street, and here was this billboard-like picture of Mickey Mouse; it said, "Walt Disney Studios, Home of Mickey Mouse." The studio was such a small operation at that time that the switchboard operator was also the receptionist. I had the Adohr uniform on, and I was on the way to Glendale, but I took this little circular, and I gave it to the switchboard operator — "Would you give this to somebody who might be interested?"

Two or three days later, Wilfred Jackson called me up and wanted me to come out and do some bird sounds. He said, "Fine, we'll use them. What else can you do?" "Well, I'll give you what I used to do on the stage. First we'll go in the house and hear mother's little musical pet." And I did the canary bird. "Now a little recitation from Mary." And I recited "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Right in the middle of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" Jackson reached over on the desk — there was a little lever on this intercom, the phone, you know. Instead of his voice going in to Walt, it was my reciting "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Walt came down to Jackson's office. After I completed "Mary Had a Little Lamb," I said, "Now we will hear some baby chickens, baby turkeys, baby ducks . . . now mama and papa duck." Walt turned to Jackson and said, "There's our talking duck!"

On the way out of the studio, who would I meet but Ted Osborne, who was the producer of that radio show. He said, "Hey, Walt heard you that night, he was going to look you up." It was just one of those things. We had to meet.

Gray: Do you remember the date when you first auditioned at Disney's?

Nash: It was sometime in '32. Walt would call me in to do various sounds in recordings — birds, or some other sounds. Finally, he called me up and wanted me to go on a radio show with him. On our way over to rehearse, he said, "I'm about ready to make a picture with the duck." The very next day, Otto Englander — Otto had worked for Walt once, then his contract expired and he went to work for Harman-Ising. When he went to work for Harman-Ising, he called me up, he wanted them to hear me, but I never heard from them. He called me up after [the radio show], and he said, "We're going to make a picture with a duck in it." He was with Ub Iwerks then. Since Walt had called me more than any other studios, I thought I should let him know, since he had told me they were about ready to make [a cartoon] with a duck in it. He said, "Sure, go ahead, but don't do any dialogue."

I went over [to Iwerks]; they weren't ready for recording, but Otto wanted me to see the board, and get acquainted with it. I got back to Adohr, which wasn't very far from where Ub Iwerks' studio was, and I called Walt. He wan't in, but I gave his secretary the title of this story. Then I wasn't in, and Walt tried to call me; I understand he tried to call me about a dozen times. The switchboard operator at Adohr told me he did. Finally, [Walt] said, "Tell him not to do a damned thing for them."

I don't think they ever registered cartoon titles until then; that was the beginning of it, I guess, because Walt was going to make *The Little Red Hen,* and Ub Iwerks had [that title for his cartoon]. So Walt made *The Wise Little Hen,* the first cartoon that Donald was in.

They called me up to come in to a story meeting, and who would see first but Pinto Colvig. Pinto told me, "Walt told me about your calling about your going over to Iwerks. He said, 'I like that loyalty in that guy, I'm going to put him on the payroll.' "

Before the story meeting was over, Walt said, "Clarence, before you leave, come up to the office, I want to talk to you." He wanted to put me on, on a retainer; I could still work for Adohr. I told Walt, "I'd rather work for just one organization, I don't want to work for two people." "Okay, we'll start you at the first of the year." "Walt, if you don't mind, I'd like to come to work sooner." "Okay, how about the second of December?" That was 1933, I went to work for him steady the second of December.

I'll never forget the next picture that Donald worked on [after *The Wise Little Hen*]; it was *The Orphans' Benefit.* We drove over to the Alexander Theater, here in Glendale, for the preview. I was more nervous about that picture than I was about *The Wise Little Hen.* I don't mind telling you that I prayed a lot that day, that that character would be a success. I was with a group of Disney people, and my wife was with me, too. I was just like an average audience — I got a big kick out of it, and I completely forgot that I had anything to do with it.

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Jim Macdonald (1974).

The Disney Shorts

The voice of the most famous Disney character, Mickey Mouse, was for many years that of *Walt Disney* himself. Disney was succeeded as Mickey's voice around 1946 by *Jim Macdonald*, a sound-effects man at the studio.

Mickey's voice did not settle into its familiar pattern — a falsetto with a nervous giggle — for a few years after *Steamboat Willie* was released in 1928, and during that time other members of the Disney staff (including *Carl W. Stalling*, the studio's first composer) sometimes provided the squawks and exclamations that made up Mickey's dialogue at the time. *Clarence Nash*, who has been the voice of Donald Duck since Donald's debut in 1934, later filled in as Mickey's voice when Walt was in Europe; Nash also did the voices of Donald's nephews and shared with *Kate-Ellen Murtagh* the job of providing meows for the kitten Figaro (who appeared in a few shorts in the '40's in addition to his role in *Pinocchio*).

Minnie Mouse's voice was provided by *Marcellite Garner* in the '30's; Miss Garner otherwise spent her days in the Disney ink and paint department. Later, *Ruth Clifford* was Minnie's voice. *Billy Bletcher* was the voice of Pegleg Pete. Pluto's barks were voiced by *Lee Millar*, *Pinto Colvig*, and *Jim Macdonald*. Millar (who died in 1941) was married to Verna Felton, whose voice is heard in many Disney features. Colvig, a Disney story man, was also the voice of the Practical Pig in *Three Little Pigs* (1933); the other two pigs were voiced by *Mary Moder* (Fiddler Pig) and *Dorothy Compton* (Fifer Pig). The Big Bad Wolf was played by Billy Bletcher, except in a scene (later removed from the film) in which the wolf pretended to be a Jewish peddler; Colvig played the wolf in that scene.

Colvig's most famous voice by far was that of Goofy. (Colvig even *acted* the part of Goofy on at least one occasion, performing Goofy's actions so that Art Babbitt could film them for study before animating Goofy in *Moving Day*, a classic 1936 short.) Colvig left the Disney studio in 1937, but returned there periodically from 1941 to 1967, primarily to record the Goofy voice for cartoons. He died in October 1967 at the age of 75.

Clara Cluck, Donald's occasional singing partner, was voiced by *Florence Gill;* Chip 'n' Dale, his chipmunk adversaries, had the sped voices of Jim Macdonald and *Dessie Flynn;* and Humphrey Bear and the Ranger, who were supporting characters in the Donald Duck cartoons before starring in their own short-lived series in the mid '50's, were voiced by Macdonald and *Bill Thompson*, respectively. Thompson was the voice of Scrooge McDuck in Scrooge's only screen appearance (*Uncle Scrooge and Money*, 1967). Bootle Beetle — another supporting character in the Donald cartoons — had the voice of *Dink Trout*.

Most of the aforementioned characters appeared in more than one cartoon. There were, of course, many other Disney cartoons whose characters never made a return appearance, and voice credits for many of these are difficult if not impossible to track down. However, the following credits are available for some of the "special" Disney animated shorts — most of them longer than usual — that have been released since 1950:

Ben and Me (1954): Amos Mouse, *Sterling Holloway;* Benjamin Franklin, *Bill Thompson;* Thomas Jefferson, *Hans Conried.*

Paul Bunyan (1958): Paul Bunyan, *Thurl Ravenscroft;* Shot Gunderson, *Ken Christy;* Chris Crosshaul, *Parley Baer;* Cal McNab, *Dallas McKennon;* Joe Muffaw, *Bob Amsberry.*

Donald in Mathmagic Land (1959): narration, *Paul Frees;* Donald Duck, *Clarence Nash;* Red Queen, *Jane Fowler.*

Goliath II (1960): narration, *Sterling Holloway;* mouse, *Paul Frees;* mother elephant, *Barbara Jo Allen;* Goliath, *Kevin Corcoran.*

The Saga of Windwagon Smith (1961): narration, *Rex Allen;* mayor, *J. Pat O'Malley.*

Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree (1966): narration, *Sebastian Cabot;* Pooh, *Sterling Holloway;* Gopher, *Howard Morris;* Owl, *Hal Smith;* Rabbit, *Junius C. Matthews;* Eeyore, *Ralph Wright;* Christopher Robin, *Jon Walmsley;* Kanga, *Barbara Luddy;* Roo, *Clint Howard.*

Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day (1968): All voices same as above, with the addition of Piglet, *John Fiedler,* and Tigger, *Paul Winchell.*

Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too (1974): Pooh, Tigger, Rabbit, Piglet, Kanga, and narration are the same as above; Christopher Robin, *Timothy Turner;* Roo, *Dori Whitaker.*

The Disney Features

The critically important voices in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) were almost all well chosen. The Dwarfs were mostly veteran character actors, all with both stage and screen experience. *Roy Atwell* was Doc, *Billy Gilbert* was Sneezy, *Otis Harlan* was Happy, and *Scotty Mattraw* was Bashful. *Pinto Colvig* of the Disney staff was both Grumpy and Sleepy; and Dopey, of course, was silent. Snow White herself was voiced by *Adriana Caselotti*, a teen-ager with some operatic training; her father was a Hollywood singing teacher. The prince was played by *Harry Stockwell.* In perhaps the single most successful piece of casting in the picture, *Lucille La Verne*, a veteran actress (she was 65 when the film was released), played the Queen, both as the icily beautiful monarch and as the evil old hag.

Other voices: Magic Mirror, *Moroni Olsen;* Huntsman, *Stuart Buchanan;* bird warblings, *Marion Darlington;* yodeling, *the Fraunfelder family and Jim Macdonald.*

Careful casting again paid dividends on *Pinocchio* (1940). Some of the actors used in this picture — most notably *Cliff Edwards* (Jiminy Cricket) and *Walter Catlett* (Foulfellow) — had already achieved some fame in live-action pictures (and, in Edwards' case, as a singer), and this was exploited by the Disney publicists. The principal voices of *Pinocchio* were the subjects of

Jim Macdonald

Jim Macdonald retired in 1976, after 42 years on the Disney studio's staff: he continues to work on special assignments for the studio. He was hired in 1934 as one of two men who formed the newly established sound-effects department, after working for Disney as a musician during the recording of cartoon soundtracks. He invented many of the Disney sound effects himself, building the necessary contraptions in his home workshop. He was asked repeatedly to provide voices as well as sound effects for the Disney cartoons (and for Disney's live-action features, too), and he has now been Mickey Mouse's voice for more than twice as many years as Walt Disney himself was.

Milt Gray interviewed Jim Macdonald on December 7, 1977, at the Disney studio; excerpts from that interview follow. M. B.

Macdonald: Being on staff, you were asked to do bits of everything. In the 42 years I was here, before I retired, I wore a lot of hats, and I never got rid of any. Whenever I did any voices, the director would say, "Jim, will you try this?" For instance, on *Cinderella*, I did the two mice, Jaq and Gus. It was something that I'd never tried before; we just thought we'd try it because I was on staff, and if I could do it, it would save having to pay actors to come in.

Winston Hibler had written a lot of strange jargon — he called it "mouse Latin," an unintelligible language. I remember a couple of words the mice would say — "Rooky rumpy shiz." Now, nobody would know what that meant. But this was done just the way Winston Hibler wanted it. The one mouse we had to speed up a bit, and the other one we slowed down. When that was cut into a rough cut, and shown to the people here, everybody loved the picture, and they loved the mice, but they said, "We wish we could understand what the mice were saying." Hib wrote more dialogue and cleared it up a bit; he'd have words in there that you could understand, with all this other mouse Latin, as Hib called it. Pretty soon, the picture comes up to color. They showed it and the people said, "Oh, this is a great improvement, we must make that dialogue more clear." Now you have the problem of speed-up and slow-down tracks, and how to get it in sync with the lips.

There was no tape then, no quarter-inch tape with the variable speed. Today, we put it on quarter-inch tape and use the variable-speed oscillator, and then we have great latitude. When we get the take we want, we do it on 35 [record the sound on 35mm film] also, because then it can be on numbered stock and they keep that in library. But we do it simultaneously on quarter-inch tape, then speed it up and slow it down. But when we did Cinderella, we had nothing but discs, and we would hold our finger on it to slow it down. It was really a trial-and-error set-up.

Gray: Was that the way most dubbing was done, from disc back to film?

Macdonald: Only on speed ups or slow downs.

Gray: I would have assumed it would have gone from film to film, in a dubbing session.

Macdonald: Unless it was some trick that was needed, like those voices, it would just go to film.

When I started doing Mickey's voice, about 30 years ago, we were doing "Mickey and the Beanstalk," and the animators and the director in charge of the sequences that needed Walt's voice on Mickey approached him and said, "Walt, we need you on the stage; we want to go ahead with this." He said, "I'm too busy, I just can't do it. Call Jim up here."

They said, "Walt wants to see you," and I thought, what have I done now? He said, "Have you ever tried to do Mickey?" I said, "No, Walt." You wouldn't try to do that, because it was always Walt's voice; there was no reason ever to try it. So he said, "Do it. Just say something." So I said [in Mickey's voice], "Hi, Walt, how are you?" You know, he always had that little identifiable giggle. He said, "That's fine." He told the directors, "Have Jim do it, in the future. He can do it fine." But, he said, "Don't let them give you long speeches. Because you have that falsetto, and you have a couple of inches of area for inflection, and it'd be terrible to have a long speech in falsetto voice." You don't have much room for inflection; you're already up there. And if you get too low, you start to yodel, and yodel right out of it. So it was always best, he said, to have short speeches.

In the early days, way back onto *Snow White*, they had the Fraunfelder family, a Swiss family, and they did a lot of the yodeling for the Dwarfs. I played in the band; I played jugs and ocarina and different things. We had a little five- or six-piece group, and I remember that Art Smith played clarinet without a mouthpiece, and all of these oddball things, and we made the sound of that organ. It was a very cute and funny sound for the organ, and when Walt heard it, he said, "That's great. Now, this is a happy little group, they should be singing. Maybe they could yodel." And he looked at me. "Have you ever yodeled?" I said, "No, Walt." He said, "Go on down to the stage and try it." So I did a lot of test yodeling. Now they had the Fraunfelders come in, and they did a great job. But, as you know, that picture went on for years and years, and as the picture keeps progressing, they keep changing scenes and so forth. Some of the yodeling would be out, and some they wanted a little more of. They got in the habit of saying, "Call Jim down, and let him do it." The studio didn't have a lot of money in the early days, so I would do those things and fill in. Like on Sneezy — [Billy Gilbert] did all of Sneezy. Sneezy never did have a great big sneeze; he always went [a smothered sneeze sound], like he was holding it back. As the years went on, and they would change Sneezy's action, they would have to change some of this sneezing. Rather than call in an actor, they would call me, because I was on staff. I just fell into doing them. This is the way I came into doing the voices.

A long time ago, I did the first articulating of a sound, on *Clock Cleaners* (1937); Ben Sharpsteen was the director on that picture. Every time the spring would pop up [while Donald was cleaning it], I'd use the jewsharp; the Duck would be quacking away, and he'd hit this thing, and it would bounce out, so there were a lot of "sproings" in there. Ben Sharpsteen said, "I wish I could get that spring to answer him, like a couple of kids; the Duck would say, 'I'm gonna beat your sproing off,' and I'd really like to hear that spring answer and say, 'Oh, yeah?' " [Jim then produced the "Oh, yeah?" sound with the jewsharp.] That was the first articulating sound, to my knowledge, and it was done very simply with the jewsharp.

Billy Bletcher (right) and Billy Gilbert in a Hal Roach comedy of the early '30's.

a spread in *Life*. However, Jiminy Cricket did not ride Cliff Edwards to fame; it was more the other way around. When Edwards died penniless in 1971, at the age of 76, newspapers found that the simplest way to identify him for their readers was to say that he had been the voice of Jiminy Cricket.

Pinocchio is the only Disney film for which *Mel Blanc* did a voice. He recorded dialogue for Gideon, the cat, before it was decided to leave Gideon mute. All that survives of Blanc's work is a hiccup.

Other voices: Geppetto, *Christian Rub;* Stromboli and the Coachman, *Charles Judels;* Pinocchio, *Dickie Jones;* Lampwick, *Frankie Darro;* Blue Fairy, *Evelyn Venable;* barkers on Pleasure Island, *Don Brodie.*

There were no voices to credit in *Fantasia* (1940), unless one counts the tiny bit of dialogue by Mickey Mouse.

The Reluctant Dragon (1941) was a hodgepodge made up of pieces of live action and animation, including appearances by Donald Duck and Goofy, who were voiced, as usual, by *Nash* and *Colvig*. The Goofy segment is *How to Ride a Horse*, the first in the famous series of "how to" cartoons directed by Jack Kinney; *John McLeish* (who later used the name *John Ployardt*) provided the suitably pompous narration, as he was to do for many other cartoons in the series.

In the "Reluctant Dragon" segment itself, *Barnett Parker* was the dragon, *Claude Allister* was Sir Giles, *Billy Lee* was the boy, *Ernie Alexander* was the father, *Val Stanton* the courier, and *J. Donald Wilson* the knight and the narrator.

The other principal segment was "Baby Weems," which was narrated by *Gerald Mohr;* the other voices were provided by *Leon Le Doux* and *Raymond Severn* (as Baby Weems in his two incarnations), *Linda Marwood* (the mother), *J. Donald Wilson* (the mayor), *Art Gilmore* (President Roosevelt), and *Edward Marr* (Walter Winchell).

In *Dumbo* (1941) the most important voice was that of Timothy J. Mouse; it was provided by *Ed Brophy*, a character actor of whom Leslie Halliwell has said that he "could be a gangster or an odd kind of valet." Brophy was perfect for the voice of a hardshelled little mouse who takes a baby elephant under his wing. No other voice rivals Brophy's in *Dumbo*, but *Cliff Edwards* made a return appearance as Jim Crow; the voice, and the character, have little in common with Jiminy Cricket. The voices of the other crows were provided by black singers from the Hall Johnson Choir. Two Disney regulars made their first feature appearances in *Dumbo: Sterling Holloway* was the stork, and *Verna Felton* was a gossiping elephant. *Billy Bletcher* also turned up, as one of the clowns.

Other voices: Ringmaster, *Herman Bing;* elephants, *Sarah Selby, Dorothy Scott, Noreen Gamill;* Joe, the elephant trainer, *Billy Sheets;* clowns, *Sheets* and *Eddie Holden;* boys, *Malcolm Hutton, Harold Manley, Tony Neil, Charles Stubbs;* roustabouts, *the Kings Men;* Casey Jr., *Margaret Wright;* narration, *John McLeish.*

The voices in *Bambi* (1942) were remarkable in two respects. For one thing, none of the *Bambi* voices enjoyed even the minor celebrity of actors like Edwards and Brophy; for another, all four of the major characters were voiced by at least two actors. Bambi himself had four different voices as he grew from infancy to adulthood: *Bobby Stewart, Donnie Dunagan, Hardy Albright* and *John Sutherland*. Thumper had three: *Peter Behn, Tim Davis* and *Sam Edwards*. Flower had two: *Stanley Alexander* and *Sterling Holloway*, as did Faline (*Cammie King* and *Ann Gillis*). Of all these voices, it was young Peter Behn's that most caught the imagination of *Bambi*'s animators, and of the public. It is a happy, ingenuous voice, with an unforced cuteness — and, ironically, it was almost excluded from the picture, until someone realized the potential it held for character development.

In contrast to the multiple voicing of the major characters, three women provided voices for several characters each. *Paula Winslow* was Bambi's mother and a pheasant; *Mary Lansing* was Aunt Ena, Mrs. Possum, the girl skunk, and a pheasant; *Thelma Boardman* was Mrs. Quail, the girl rabbit, and a pheasant.

Other voices: Friend Owl, *Will Wright;* mother hare, *Marjorie Lee;* Prince of the Forest, *Fred Shields;* bird warblings, *Marion Darlington;* frightened pheasant, *Thelma Hubbard;* mole, *Otis Harlan;* animal children, *Jeanne Christy, Janet Chapman, Bobette Audrey, Babs Nelson, Jack Horner, Fracesca Santoro, Elouise Wohlwend, Sandra Lee Richards,* and *Dolyn Bramston Cook.*

The next few Disney features had little to offer in the way of novel voice work, except for the introduction of Jose Carioca (*Jose Oliveira*) in *Saludos Amigos* (1943). *Fred Shields* and *Frank Graham* served as narrators, the same function filled by radio announcer *Art Baker* on the next feature, *Victory Through Air Power* (1943). *Graham* and *Shields* also narrated part of *The Three Caballeros* (1945); *Sterling Holloway* narrated "The Cold-blooded Penguin." In *Caballeros, Clarence Nash* (as Donald Duck) and *Jose Oliveira* (as Jose Carioca) were joined by *Joaquin Garay* as Panchito, a Mexican rooster. Oliveira also provided the voice of the aracuan bird.

Make Mine Music (1946), the first Disney postwar feature, was a collection of short subjects each of which was narrated and/or sung by such people as *Nelson Eddy* and *Dinah Shore;* there was no voice work (in the sense of voices emanating from the mouths of the characters on the screen) unless one counts the animals' noises by Pinto Colvig for "Peter and the Wolf" and "The Whale Who Wanted to Sing at the Met."

Song of the South (1946) was the first Disney feature since *Bambi* to boast any really outstanding voice work, even though it had only three characters. *James Baskette* — the film's Uncle Remus — also was the voice of Br'er Fox, and two other black actors, *Johnny Lee* (Br'er Rabbit) and *Nicodemus Stewart* (Br'er

Billy Bletcher

Billy Bletcher was born in 1894 and entered show business more than 60 years ago. He had a full career as an actor in the silent comedies of Mack Sennett and Al Christie. In the '30's, he was teamed with Billy Gilbert in a series of two-reel Hal Roach comedies. He also did the voice of the Lone Ranger on radio in 1950, substituting for Brace Beemer. His voice is remarkably rich and deep, especially coming from a man who is only five foot two. His voice was perfect for the villains of the cartoons of the '30's and '40's.

This is an excerpt from an interview that Milt Gray and I recorded with Billy Bletcher in Hollywood on June 7, 1969. M. B.

Bletcher: Many years ago, there weren't many auditions, there weren't many of us. They were doing a thing called *Three Little Pigs* at Disney's, and Pinto Colvig told me, "Why don't you go over and do this thing for Walt, they want a guy who can huff and puff and blow your house in." So what the hell, I did it, and I recorded this thing for Walt, as the Big Bad Wolf.

That put me in pretty solid with Walt. From then on, I had a session every week, not only to record one voice, but to record two or three voices, for Walt. One actor would do the whole damned job. Now they engage the big names and pay big money. But when we were there, the pay was very small, and if you did three or four voices you got paid just one day's salary.

I stayed with Walt for quite a few years, just on a day-to-day basis. There was one thing I never could understand. I wanted to contribute one or two of the voices in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Walt's answer to me was, "Billy, your voice is heard so much in all of these singles that I make, I don't think I'd want to use you as one of the Seven Dwarfs." That didn't make sense to me.

Then, too, I worked for Schlesinger, who made the Warner Bros. cartoons. Between Disney and Warner Bros., I kept quite busy. At that time, understand, there were only a half dozen of us. Now, there are 600 of these characters around town, and it's been hell, especially for a man my age. They don't stop to figure whether the guy can still do the job. They figures he's an old man, they've got to get somebody who's on his toes.

Gray: Which character voices did you do for Walt, and for Warner's?

Bletcher: For Walt, it was the Big Bad Wolf, and then I did a character called Pegleg Pete. Plus characters who didn't mean so much, like an Irish cop. The same at Warner Bros. There were just Mel and me. At Metro, I was the old Dutch captain in a series called *The Captain and The Kids.*

Barrier: Did Walt attend many of the recording sessions?

Bletcher: Very few. He listened to it after it was recorded. After they moved into the new studio, he was too busy. He was a great man for story; they'd sit around for weeks and weeks arguing some story point. If he wasn't satisfied, he's say, "Go ahead and record it and let's see what it sounds like." His ability to visualize when he was listening to recordings was marvelous; he'd say, "That just doesn't ring true to me," that sort of thing.

Barrier: Were you ever in any Disney feature-length cartoons at all?

Bletcher: Never. I guess what went for *Snow White* went for everything.*

Barrier: The work you did for Walt on *Three Little Pigs* . . . was that your first cartoon work of any kind?

Bletcher: I believe it was, yes.

Barrier: Were you under contract to Disney?

Bletcher: No, no. Clarence Nash is the only one. He gets a check every week, as Walt wanted, and he sure deserves it.

Barrier: Did you play primarily villains in the cartoons?

Bletcher: Mostly, yes, because it was natural for me to stay down in the lower registers.

Barrier: Do you recall any incidents from your recording sessions?

Bletcher: There was a time in the cartoon business when they would photograph you as you did the dialogue. I did a thing for Walt once called *The Golden Touch,* all about King Midas, and they put white on my lips, for the animator to animate from, and photographed me that way.

Barrier: When was your last cartoon work for Disney?

Bletcher: I did two or three spots with the chipmunks, Chip 'n' Dale . . . I did some things with them, character voices. One was an Italian. Then I went to Detroit in the spring of 1950 to do the Lone Ranger radio show.

Barrier: What other cartoon work have you done besides what we've already covered?

Bletcher: I did a little bit for Bob Clampett at Warner Bros. I was the Lone Stranger in *The Lone Stranger and Porky*; it won a plaque for best cartoon of the year in 1939.

Clampett's a strange sort of a guy, kind of a fussbudget, can't make up his mind. Bill Hanna is the same way, although Bill stays out of the recording stages, now, he doesn't fool around with the actors.

Some people are like that, they like to stand beside you and say, "Do it my way." I always got along great with Walt and all of Walt's men, especially Jack Kinney. They left the actor alone. They'd say to themselves, "The reason I got the guy here is because he has something to contribute. I won't pick on him."

Barrier: How did you and Pinto Colvig come to know each other?

Bletcher: He was a gag writer for Mack Sennett when I first came out to California. Every now and then they'd have use for a cartoon drawing — in the titles, you know — and Pinto did those.

Pinto and I did the voices of the Munchkins in *The Wizard of Oz.* In the making of *The Wizard of Oz,* they found that they needed some voices that could be understood. The little people didn't seem able to deliver, so to speak. Pinto and I were called out to record the dialogue for these little people, cleaning it up so it was understandable. Pinto and I handled the whole business.

This was before they paid you by check; they paid you by the day, in cash. There were a lot of robberies going on around the Metro studio, and we used to work unil three and four in the morning on this sound stage. We'd wind up with $150 or $175 in cash, so Pinto and I decided we'd put our money in our socks before we left the studio.

Recording the voices of these little people, you had to watch the stuff on the screen in order to have it match. For the little that you saw on the screen, Pinto and I were there about eight nights; we'd start to work at six at night and work until four in the morning. They don't care how they spend their money.

* Bletcher did have a minor role in *Dumbo;* his voice is recognizable as one of the clowns.

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Pinto Colvig in the early '30's. Colvig, a Disney gag man, was the voice of Goofy for more than 30 years, returning to record the voice after leaving the Disney staff in 1937. He later was the voice of Bozo the Clown for Capitol Records.

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Barbara Luddy and Larry Roberts, the voices for Lady and the Tramp in the Disney feature of that title. This publicity photo was taken around 1954. Luddy later provided voices in such Disney features as Sleeping Beauty *and* The Rescuers.

Bear) were the voices for the other two characters.

Fun and Fancy Free (1947) marked the debut of *Jim Macdonald* as the voice of Mickey Mouse; *Nash* and *Colvig* continued as Donald and Goofy in "Mickey and the Beanstalk." *Billy Gilbert* was Willie the Giant, and *Anita Gordon* was the singing harp. *Cliff Edwards* was again Jiminy Cricket, and Macdonald was Lumpjaw in the "Bongo" segment, which was narrated by *Dinah Shore.*

Melody Time (1948), was another compilation feature along the lines of *Make Mine Music;* as with that picture, only *Colvig's* work — this time as the aracuan bird — really qualifies as voice work in the true sense.

The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad (1949) was the last of the postwar compilation features, and the handling of the voices in the film's two segments is sharply different. *Bing Crosby* narrates the *Ichabod* half; there are no other voices. The *Mr. Toad* half is narrated by *Basil Rathbone,* but also comes with a full complement of voices — mostly a legacy of prewar recording sessions, since production on *The Wind in the Willows* began in 1941. Disney shelved the film then because, he said soon after, he did not think he could make the film to meet his standards within the budget limitations the banks had imposed on him.

Eric Blore, the quintessential Englishman in many films of the '30's (most notably in several of the Astaire-Rogers vehicles), was perfectly cast as Mr. Toad. *Colin Campbell* was Mole, *Claude Allister* was the Water Rat, and *Campbell Grant* — a Disney character designer and story man — was Angus MacBadger.

Other voices: Cyril Proudbottom (Toad's horse), policemen and jailer, *J. Pat O'Malley;* prosecutor, *John Ployardt (John McLeish);* judge, *Alec Harford;* Mr. Winky, *Leslie Denison.*

In *Cinderella* (1950), radio singer *Ilene Woods* had the title role, but the more notable voices were provided by *Eleanor Audley* (a superbly cold and evil stepmother), *Jim Macdonald* (whose voice was speeded up for the two mice, Gus-Gus and Jaq), and *June Foray* (who made her Disney debut as Lucifer the cat). *Verna Felton* returned as the Fairy Godmother, in her first Disney role since *Dumbo.*

Other voices: King and Grand Duke, *Luis van Rooten;* Prince Charming, *William Phipps;* Drizella, *Rhoda Elaine Williams;* Anastasia, *Lucille Bliss;* Bruno, *Jim Macdonald;* narration, *Betty Lou Gerson. Don Barclay, Claire Dubrey* and *Helene Stanley* are also credited in some film references as providing voices in *Cinderella.*

Before *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), the voices of such actors as Brophy, Blore and Edwards had only colored the characters they portrayed. In *Alice, Ed Wynn* (the Mad Hatter) and *Jerry Colonna* (the March Hare) dominated their characters. Ward Kimball's animation of the two characters was appropriate for the voices; the problem was that the voices were not appropriate for the film. Other voices in *Alice* were better, although sometimes trembling on the verge of excess, as with *Richard Haydn's* prissy Caterpillar. *Bill Thompson* of radio's *Fibber McGee and Molly* played both the White Rabbit and the Dodo, in his first Disney feature; the Rabbit got Thompson's Wallace Wimple voice from the radio show, whereas the Dodo had something of Thompson's Old Timer in him. (Thompson was more flexible than some of the other Disney regulars — Sterling Holloway and Verna Felton always sounded about the same, for instance — but his range was more restricted than that of, say, Mel Blanc or Daws Butler.)

Other voices: Cheshire Cat, *Sterling Holloway;* Queen of Hearts, *Verna Felton;* Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee, and the Walrus and the Carpenter, *J. Pat O'Malley;* Alice, *Kathryn Beaumont;* Alice's Sister, *Heather Angel;* doorknob, *Joseph Kearns;* Bill the Lizard, *Larry Grey;* bird in tree and hornducks, *Queenie Leonard;* King of Hearts, *Dink Trout;* Rose, *Doris Lloyd;* Dormouse, *Jim Macdonald;* card painters, *the Mellomen, Ken Beaumont, Larry*

Grey; flowers, *Queenie Leonard, Lucille Blass;* flamingoes, *Pinto Colvig.*

In *Peter Pan* (1953), *Hans Conried* played his first Disney character, giving a splendid performance as Captain Hook; he also was Mr. Darling, and a pirate. *Bill Thompson* performed yet another variation on Wallace Wimple as Mr. Smee, and provided voices for other members of the pirate crew. The rest of the cast was filled with voices that were or would become Disney regulars: *Kathryn Beaumont* (Wendy), *Heather Angel* (Mrs. Darling), *Candy Candido* (Indian Chief), and *June Foray* (a mermaid and an Indian squaw).

Other voices: John, *Paul Collins;* Michael, *Tommy Luske, Margaret Kerry;* the Lost Boys, *Stuffy Singer, Johnny McGovern, Robert Ellis, Jeffrey Silver,* and (singing) the *Mitchell Choirboys;* mermaids, *Margaret Kerry, Connie Hilton;* narrator, *Tom Conway.*

Lady and the Tramp (1955) is most notable, from a vocal standpoint, for the presence of *Peggy Lee* in the cast; she was effective as the voice of Peg, the salty Pekingese in the pound, of Si and Am, the cats, and of "Darling," Lady's mistress. *Barbara Luddy,* a radio actress who was to become a Disney regular, made her Disney debut in this film, as Lady. *Stan Freberg* played his only Disney feature roles as the beaver and as an assistant in the pet shop. (Freberg was to have played the Jabberwocky in *Alice,* but the character was eliminated from the film.) *Bill Thompson* — in his third straight Disney feature — played three dogs (Jock, Bull, and Dachsie), and a policeman. *Dallas McKennon,* soon to become a TV-cartoon standby, had four parts (Toughy, Pedro, the professor and a hyena).

Other voices: Tramp, *Larry Roberts;* Aunt Sarah, *Verna Felton;* Tony, *George Givot;* Trusty, *Bill Baucom;* Boris, *Alan Reed;* Jim Dear, *Lee Millar;* alligator, *Thurl Ravenscroft;* pound hounds, *the Mellomen.*

In *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) *Eleanor Audley* returned as Maleficent, in her first Disney feature role since *Cinderella.* Other voices in the picture — which had a smaller vocal cast then usual — were even more familiar: *Bill Thompson* (King Hubert), *Verna Felton* (Flora), *Barbara Luddy* (Merryweather) and *Candy Candido* (Maleficent's creatures). The narration was by *Marvin Miller,* who had narrated many UPA cartoons earlier in the decade.

Other voices: Princess Aurora, *Mary Costa;* King Stefan, *Taylor Holmes;* Prince Philip, *Bill Shirley;* Fauna, *Barbara Jo Allen.*

One Hundred and One Dalmatians (1961), by contrast, had a very large cast, and only a few of its voices were Disney regulars. Vocally, as well as visually, *Dalmatians* was a departure from the features of the '50's. Although some of its voices were drawn from live-action films (*Rod Taylor* was Pongo, and *Tom Conway* was a magnificent collie), there were no star voices among them; *Dalmatians,* in its use of voices, was reminiscent more of *Bambi* than of any of the other postwar features.

Other voices: The Colonel, Jasper, Inspector Craven, Motor Mechanic, *J. Pat O'Malley;* Roger Radcliff, *Ben Wright;* Horace, *Fred Worlock;* Perdita, *Lisa Daniels, Cate Bauer;* Cruella de Vil, Miss Birdwell, *Betty Lou Gerson;* nanny-cook, Queen, *Martha Wentworth;* Sergeant Tibs, *Dave Frankham;* Anita, *Lisa Davis;* the Labrador, *George Pelling;* Towser, *Tudor Owen;* television announcer, *Ramsay Hill;* Princess, *Queenie Leonard;* Duchess, *Marjorie Bennett;* Patch, *Micky Maga;* Holly, *Barbara Beaird;* Lucky, *Mimi Gibson;* Penny, *Sandra Abbott;* Danny and the Captain, *Thurl Ravenscroft;* quizmaster, *Paul Wexler;* Yorkshire terrier, *Bob Stevens;* Rover, *Barbara Luddy;* Dirty Dawson, *Paul Frees;* miscellaneous dog barkings, *Max Smith, Dallas McKennon;* miscellaneous voices, *Sylvia Marriott;* "Kanine Krunchies" commercial sung by *Lucille Bliss.*

Although *Dalmatians* had a distinctly English atmosphere, in keeping with the London setting of its story, the same could not be said of *The Sword in the Stone* (1964). Even more than other Disney cartoons supposedly set in England *(Alice, Mr. Toad, Peter Pan), Sword* was Americanized, to the point that Wart, the future King Arthur, sounded like a typical American boy (he was, in fact, played by three such American boys — *Rickie Sorensen* and *Richard* and *Robert Reitherman,* the latter two the sons of Wolfgang Reitherman, *Sword's* director).

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Cliff Edwards (standing), the voice of Jim Crow in Dumbo *(1941), with Jack Kinney, who directed the crow sequence in that feature. Edwards is best known as the voice of Jiminy Cricket in* Pinocchio *(1940).*

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Sterling Holloway and friend in a 1941 publicity photo for Dumbo. *Holloway appeared frequently in live-action character roles in the 1930's, including one in Paramount's* Alice in Wonderland *(1933). He was the Cheshire Cat in the 1951 Disney version of* Alice.

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Peter Behn, the little boy who was the voice of Thumper in Bambi *(1942), with animators (from left) Ollie Johnston, Milt Kahl and Frank Thomas, in a 1940 publicity photo.*

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Verna Felton was one of the elephants in Dumbo.

The sensitivity to voices that was evident in *Dalmatians* was absent in Sword, and it has not been seen again.

Other voices: Narrator, Sir Ector, *Sebastian Cabot;* Merlin, *Karl Swenson;* Mad Madam Mim, granny squirrel, scullery maid, *Martha Wentworth;* Archimedes, *Junius C. Matthews;* Kay, *Norman Alden;* Sir Pelinore, *Alan Napier;* girl squirrel, *Ginny Tyler;* scullery maid, bird, *Barbara Jo Allen;* knight in the crowd, *Thurl Ravenscroft;* wolf, *Jim Macdonald.*

Two voice artists who were by now Disney regulars — *J. Pat O'Malley* and *Martha Wentworth* — provided most of the voices for the animated segment in *Mary Poppins* (1964); O'Malley played a fox, Wentworth was a Cockney Cow. *Jim Macdonald* also provided some miscellaneous voices.

The four fully animated features that have followed *The Sword in the Stone* have been dominated by star voices. Since all of these films have been so similar in their approach to voices, their credits will be listed together, along with those for the animated sequence in *Bedknobs and Broomsticks.*

Jungle Book (1967): Baloo, *Phil Harris;* Bagheera, *Sebastian Cabot;* Shere Khan, *George Sanders;* King Louie, *Louis Prima;* Kaa, *Sterling Holloway;* Colonel Hathi, Buzzie, *J. Pat O'Malley;* Mowgli, *Bruce Reitherman;* Hathi's wife, *Verna Felton;* Hathi's son, *Clint Howard;* Akela, *John Abbott;* Rama, *Ben Wright;* Dizzy, *Lord Tim Hudson;* Flaps, *Chad Stuart;* Ziggy, *Digby Wolfe;* the girl, *Darleen Carr;* monkeys, *Leo de Lyon, Bill Skiles, Pete Henderson, Hal Smith.*

The Aristocats (1970): Thomas O'Malley, *Phil Harris;* Duchess, *Eva Gabor;* Roquefort, *Sterling Holloway;* Scat Cat, *Scatman Crothers;* Chinese cat, *Paul Winchell;* English cat, *Lord Tim Hudson;* Italian cat, *Vito Scotti;* Russian cat, *Thurl Ravenscroft;* Berlioz, *Dean Clark;* Marie, *Liz English;* Toulouse, *Gary Dubin;* Frou Frou, *Nancy Kulp;* Napoleon, *Pat Buttram;* Lafayette, *George Lindsey;* Abigail Gabble, *Monica Evans;* Amelia Gabble, *Carole Shelley;* Georges Hautecourt, *Charles Lane;* Mme. Bonfamille, *Hermione Baddeley;* Edgar and removal men, *Roddy Maude-Roxby;* Uncle Waldo, *Bill Thompson;* French milkman, *Pete Renoudet.*

Bedknobs and Broomsticks (1972); codfish, *Robert Holt;* lion and secretary bird, *Lennie Weinrib;* bear, *Dallas McKennon;* miscellaneous noises, *Jim Macdonald.*

Robin Hood (1973): Little John, *Phil Harris;* Prince John, *Peter Ustinov;* Sir Hiss, *Terry-Thomas;* Alan-a-Dale, *Roger Miller;* Robin Hood, *Brian Bedford;* Maid Marian, *Monica Evans;* Friar Tuck, *Andy Devine;* Lady Kluck, *Carole Shelley;* Sheriff of Nottingham, *Pat Buttram;* Trigger, *George Lindsey;* Nutsy, *Ken Curtis;* Skippy, *Billy Whitaker;* Sissy and little sister, *Dana Laurita;* Tagalong, *Dori Whitaker;* Toby Tortoise, *Richie Sanders;* Otto the blacksmith, *J. Pat O'Malley;* alligator, *Candy Candido;* King Richard, *Peter Ustinov;* widow rabbit, *Barbara Luddy;* sexton, *John Fiedler.*

The Rescuers (1977): Bianca, *Eva Gabor;* Bernard, *Bob Newhart;* Rufus, *John McIntire;* Orville, *Jim Jordan;* Penny, *Michelle Stacy;* Madame Medusa, *Geraldine Page;* Mr. Snoops, *Joe Flynn;* Ellie Mae, *Jeanette Nolan;* Luke, *Pat Buttram;* Evinrude, crocodiles, *Jim Macdonald;* swampfolk, *Larry Clemmons, John Fiedler, Dub Taylor, George Lindsey;* chairman, Gramps, *Bernard Fox;* TV announcer, *Bill McMillan.*

The Warner Cartoons

Warner Bros. is, of course, virtually synonymous with *Mel Blanc,* who has provided the voices for most of the important Warner characters and for many incidental characters as well. Blanc's first big assignment was as the voice of Porky Pig. He succeeded *Joe Dougherty,* a veteran entertainer and character actor who specialized in a doubletalk routine. Dougherty played supporting roles in many television programs, as well as in such films as *Ziegfeld Girl* (1941) and *The Jazz Singer* (1928). He died in April of this year. His voice for Porky, like Blanc's, was speeded up in recording.

Blanc was Bugs Bunny's voice from the time that the "real" Bugs first appeared in Tex Avery's *A Wild Hare* (1940), and he also spoke for the embryonic Bugs in several earlier cartoons.

Blanc was the voice of Daffy Duck from the beginning (*Porky's Duck Hunt,* 1937), and was also the voice for these Warner characters: Henery Hawk, Tweety, Sylvester (whose voice is identical to Daffy's, except that Daffy's is sped), Yosemite Sam, Foghorn Leghorn, Pepe le Pew, Charlie Dog, Speedy Gonzales, the little man from Mars, and the Tasmanian Devil. In some cases, Blanc took over voices that other actors had originated, as with Beaky Buzzard (originally *Kent Rogers*) and Hubie the mouse (originally *Stan Freberg*); Blanc also did

Bert, Hubie's dopey companion. Blanc and Freberg were Mac and Tosh, the goofy gophers.

Blanc even shared the voice of Miss Prissy — Foghorn Leghorn's sometime paramour — with *Bea Benaderet, June Foray* and *Julie Bennett*. Those three actresses also shared the voice of Granny, Tweety's owner; Benaderet was the first Granny, followed by Foray and then by Bennett. Foray was also Witch Hazel in several Chuck Jones cartoons.

Arthur Q. Bryan originated the voice of Elmer Fudd; it was continued by *Daws Butler and Hal Smith* after Bryan's death in 1959.

There were a few other non-Blanc voices in the Warner menagerie. Chuck Jones' Three Bears were played by *Billy Bletcher* (the father bear), Bea Benaderet (the mother bear) and Stan Freberg (the baby bear). Ralph Phillips, the daydreaming child in two Jones cartoons, was voiced by *Dick Beals*. Daws Butler did a Frank Fontaine voice for Sam the cat in the Tweety series.

Two women were vocally active in the Warner cartoons of the '30's and '40's. *Bernice Hansen* provided voices for many small, cute characters, such as Sniffles, and *Sara Berner* was the voice for a wide assortment of incidental characters; one notable example is the guttural mother buzzard in Bob Clampett's *Bugs Bunny Gets the Boid*, Beaky Buzzard's debut cartoon (1942). Benaderet took Berner's place as the source of virtually all the female voices in the middle '40's, and Foray succeeded Benaderet in that role in the early '50's.

There were other voices in the Warner cartoons that are worthy of mention. For example, Daws Butler and June Foray did the voices for the Jackie Gleason, Art Carney and Audrey Meadows characters in Robert McKimson's *The Honey-mousers* (1956). In a later McKimson cartoon of the same type, *The Mouse That Jack Built* (1959), *Jack Benny* and other members of his television show's cast provided the voices for their cartoon equivalents. Several black performers, including *Vivian Dandridge* (So White), *Ruby Dandridge* (narrator), and *Zoot Watson* (Prince Chawmin), were the voices of characters in Clampett's *Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs* (1943). *Pinto Colvig* contributed voices to several cartoons in the early '40's, including *Ding Dog Daddy* (1942), in which he played a love-struck hound. *Cliff Nazarro* was Egghead, a Joe Penner sound-alike, in the '30's, and also narrated some cartoons. Another narrator was *Robert C. Bruce*, who can be heard in most of Tex Avery's travelogue parodies.

As already mentioned, *Carman Maxwell* of the Harman-Ising staff was the voice for Bosko, the first Warner character (with *Rochelle Hudson* as Bosko's girlfriend Honey). When Leon Schlesinger broke with Harman and Ising and set up his own studio, the voice for his first character — Buddy — was again provided by a staff member, the animator *Jack Carr*.

This tradition of in-house voices was continued over the years. *Ted Pierce*, a Warner story man, was adept at impersonations; he imitated the Great Gildersleeve in *Hare Conditioned* (1945), Bud Abbott in *A Tale of Two Kitties* (1942, and Baby Snooks' father in *Quentin Quail* (1946). *Cal Howard*, another story man, was the voice of Gabby Goat in a few early Porky Pig cartoons. The outstanding in-house voice, though, was that of *Tex Avery;* his is the deep, rolling, chuckling voice that turns up in such cartoons as *Ham-ateur Nite* (1939), and *Ghost Wanted* (1940). Avery's voice was so good, in fact, that he was brought back for an encore after he had left the Schlesinger studio. It is his voice we hear when the ineptly villainous spider speaks in *Meatless Fly Day* (1944), a cartoon directed by Friz Freleng more than two years after Avery had gone to work for MGM.

Courtesy of Bob Clampett

Joe Dougherty (left), the original voice of Porky Pig, with actor Robert Taylor in a 1941 photo.

The MGM Cartoons

Avery continued to provide voices for some of his characters at MGM, where he began directing in 1940. It is he who speaks for Junior, the bulky, stupid bear who was paired with a little bear named George in a series of cartoons in the 1940's. (Avery had provided a similar voice for Willoughby, a stupid hunting dog, in his Warner cartoons.) George was voiced by *Frank Graham*, whose voice was used for countless incidental characters at MGM and other studios in the '40s.

Both Avery and Graham spoke occasionally for Droopy, whose voice was originated by *Bill Thompson*, and is similar to Thompson's Wallace Wimple radio voice. *Don Messick* and *Daws Butler* also provided Droopy's voice on occasion. Butler originated a voice at MGM that has had far wider currency than even the Droopy voice. Droopy was usually paired with a wolf character, whose voice, when he spoke, was that of Frank Graham. In a handful of Droopy cartoons made just before the MGM studio closed, Butler gave to the wolf a distinctive Southern drawl. It was this voice, only slightly changed, that turned up a couple of years later in Huckleberry Hound's mouth, after a stop at the Lantz Studio as the voice of Smedley. (Avery took the voice with him when he left MGM for Lantz.)

Most of the other voices for the MGM cartoons were familiar. *Billy Bletcher*, for example, was the Captain in the short-lived "Captain and the Kids" series of the late '30's. He turned up as Barney Bear (*Rudolf Ising*, Barney's originator, and *Paul Frees*

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Mel Blanc

Mel Blanc was the first person connected with animated cartoons whom I ever interviewed. Milt Gray and I saw him on June 4, 196º, in his offices, which at that time were in Hollywood. Excerpts from that interview follow. M. B.

Barrier: How did you first come to go with Schlesinger and get involved in cartoons?

Blanc: Well, I tried for a year and a half to get an audition. The fellow in charge was named Mr. Spencer. He said, "I'm sorry, we got all the voices we need." Finally, the guy died. I went to the next man in charge, Treg Brown, and I said, "Look, I've been trying to get to Spencer and tell him about my voices, but he's gone now and I wanted to audition for him." Treg said, "Why don't you audition for me?" So I did, and I had some funny gags, and Treg was on the floor laughing. He called the directors in and they got a big kick out of it. One of the directors said, "Can you do a drunken bull?" I said [in drunken voice], "I'd be — hic — very happy to do a — hic — drunken bull." So he said, "Great, that's just what I want, what are you doing next Tuesday?" So I tried to figure out what I was doing — tried to figure out, I wasn't doing a damned thing — and I said, "Yeah, I think I can make it all right." So that was my first job in cartoons, doing a drunken bull who'd eaten some sour mash. I don't recall the title of the cartoon.

Barrier: Which director was that for?

Blanc: Frank Tashlin.

Gray: What year was this?

Blanc: 1937.*

Barrier: What were you doing before then?

Blanc: Radio . . . various shows. I had my own show up in Portland, Oregon, called *Cobwebs and Nuts.* This was actually where I learned to do all these voices, because they were too cheap to hire any talent, outside of myself. I had my wife — who is a non-professional — read a couple of lines when I needed a woman's voice; I was writing this script for an hour a day, six days a week, so I had to have a woman's voice in there once in a while. The program was on for two years. They got quite a kick out of it up there, but there was very little money. My wife said to me, "What do you want to do, have a nervous breakdown or go to Los Angeles?" So I said, "Let's go to Los Angeles." This two years up there, writing and doing all the voices, was like a college education. I had to create it as I went along.

From there, I came to Los Angeles and started working here. For one day, I got more than I got for a whole week up there. My mother-in-law was partially responsible for my success down here, because she would answer the phone when I wasn't at home; we were living with her and one day Treg Brown called and asked, "Can Mel do a Lou Lehr?" Which was a German voice in the Fox Movietone pictures of the time. My mother-in-law didn't know if I could do it or not, but she said, "Sure, he can do that." Every time somebody would call, she'd say, "Oh, sure, he's a cinch to do that." She'd tell me when I'd come home, and I'd think, "How the hell am I going to do this?" But it worked out all right.

Barrier: When you went to work for Schlesinger there were already a number of voice people working for him, weren't there?

Blanc: Not too many, but there were others. What they used to do was have the Warner stock company for motion

* Blanc may be confusing two cartoons. In Tex Avery's *Picador Porky* (1937), two drunken tramps disguise themselves as a bull so that Porky can win a prize offered to the champion bullfighter. None of the voices in this cartoon is unmistakably Blanc's, but Blanc definitely did do the voice for the title character in Tashlin's *Little Pancho Vanilla* (1938), which also has a Mexican setting.

pictures do the voices. That way it didn't cost them anything. Then when I came in there, they saw how they could improve their pictures, and that the voice was a pretty big portion of the pictures. So then they started hiring a few people, such as Stan Freberg. Stan and I worked together on many cartoons. He did just incidental characters, no lead characters.

Barrier: Have you ever done Elmer Fudd? I know Arthur Q. Bryan did it at first.

Blanc: Arthur Q. .Bryan came to Schlesinger's cartoons some time after I had been with them. His voice was chosen from a radio show he did, *The Grouch Club*. Arthur Q. passed away at least 10 years ago [on November 30, 1959; he was 60]. Then it was done by a young fellow by the name of Hal Smith, but they finally came back to me to do Elmer Fudd on the commercials we just completed. I didn't like to do it, but inasmuch as they couldn't find anyone else to do it, they had me do it for American Airlines, along with Bugs Bunny. Although I can imitate, I don't like to imitate. I think it's stealing from another person.*

Gray: How long did it normally take to record the voices for a seven-minute cartoon?

Blanc: It used to take me a day or a day and a half to do one cartoon. The directors had different ideas and I couldn't dig 'em, it was pretty hard to understand what a guy meant. He knew what the cartoon was going to be like, but I didn't, and he had a hard time explaining it to me. They showed me the storyboards, but many of the speeches that they wanted me to do just didn't jibe with the storyboards. Through experience, and learning what they wanted, it now takes between an hour and an hour and a half. Sometimes less, sometimes I can knock it out in a half hour.

You know, I created the voice for Woody Woodpecker; I used to run down the halls in high school and do that laugh and hear the echo. I almost got kicked out of school for doing it. I did this for Walter Lantz, and then I was contracted to Warner Bros., and I couldn't do it for him any more.

* Blanc's Foghorn Leghorn voice is, however, clearly derived from that of Senator Claghorn (Kenny Delmar) on the Fred Allen radio show.

The voices for the cast of The Flintstones. *From left, Alan Reed (Fred Flintstone), Jean VanderPyl (Wilma Flintstone), Bea Benaderet (Betty Rubble), and Mel Blanc (Barney Rubble).*

Barrier: You mentioned your Warner contract . . . they had you exclusively for cartoons?

Blanc: They had me exclusively, which was one of the biggest mistakes I ever made, money-wise. They paid me a fair salary, but they wouldn't let me work for anybody else. I had to give up Lantz and Disney and all of them.

Gray: Oh, did you work for Disney?

Blanc: I worked for Disney in 1937, before I worked for Warner's. I worked on one full-length picture, *Pinocchio*, in which I did a cat. I worked 16 days and they paid me $50 a day. Out of all that I did, they used one hiccup. I got $800 for one hiccup, which I think is a pretty high price. The cat I did was Giddy, and the only thing he said in the whole picture was that hiccup.

Barrier: He had a lot of dialogue originally?

Blanc: Oh yeah, a lot of dialogue. I talked back and forth with Walter Catlett, who played Foulfellow the fox.

Barrier: You had a serious accident several years ago, [actually in January 1961] didn't you?

Blanc: Yes, I was almost killed. In fact, 18 doctors gave me up at UCLA hospital, and never thought I'd walk again. A young fellow lost control of his car, so he says, and jumped the center line and hit me head-on in the curb lane. I was unconscious for 21 days, and in the hospital for a couple of months. When I came out of it, they came to me and said, "Look, we've 125 people out there who will be out of work unless you can record something for them." So I said, "Hell, bring up a tape recorder, I can at least make a scratch track so that they'll have the lines, then when I get better I'll do the lines again so they'll have the right inflections and everything."

Gray: I understand that you're allergic to carrots, and you have to eat carrots while you're doing Bugs Bunny's voice.

Blanc: That's why I always save those lines until the end. I'm actually not allergic to them, but when I eat one, I can't talk. It sort of gets in my throat, and I don't sound like the character. I can say a few lines like that, then I have to spit 'em out. I tried potatoes, celery, everything else — nothing worked like carrots. They have that crisp crunch to them.

Mae Questel is best known now as "Aunt Bluebell," who sells Scott Towels in television commercials. She got her start in vaudeville in the Bronx, and was the voice for Betty Boop, Olive Oyl, and other Fleischer and Paramount characters.

Jackson Beck, a radio announcer, was the voice for Bluto in the Popeye cartoons from the time the Fleischer studio (by then called the Famous Studio) moved back from Miami to New York in the early '40's.

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also provided Barney's voice at various times) and as Spike, the bulldog, in Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera's Tom and Jerry series. (Daws Butler also was a voice for Spike.) Butch, the bulldog foil for Droopy in a number of Tex Avery's later cartoons, was voiced by Bill Thompson. *Bernice Hansen* was the voice for yet another tiny, cute character — Ising's Little Cheeser. Ising himself spoke for Bosko in his few MGM appearances.

Some other voices are worth mentioning. *Red Coffee* was the Donald Duck-ish voice of Little Quacker in the Tom and Jerry series, and *Mel Blanc* made a number of MGM appearances; he is, for example, the voice of the old squirrel in Hugh Harman's *Peace on Earth* (1939). *Sara Berner* was the voice of the mother bear and Wilbur in Harman's three cartoons with his version of the three bears. *Lillian Randolph* was the voice of "Mammy Two-shoes," the black maid in the Tom and Jerry cartoons. Radio announcer *Harlow Wilcox* narrated *Gallopin' Gals* (1940). *Pinto Colvig* was the father pig in Avery's *One Ham's Family* (1943).

One important MGM voice remains a mystery: no one can remember who was the voice of Screwy Squirrel.

The Fleischer and Paramount Cartoons

Betty Boop, the first Fleischer "star" of the sound era, was voiced at times by several different actresses, among them *Ann Little, Marjorie Hines,* and *Bonnie Poe,* but it is *Mae Questel's* voice that is most closely associated with the character. Questel was the voice of Olive Oyl and she also provided the voices for such characters as Little Audrey and Casper the Friendly Ghost. (Casper was also voiced by *Gwen Davies* and *Cecil Roy.*) For a brief period during World War II, she was the voice of Popeye.

It is *Jack Mercer,* though, who has been Popeye's voice for most of the last 45 years. Popeye was first voiced by *William A. Costello,* a musician and actor who was known as "Red Pepper Sam," but Mercer followed him in the role after only a few cartoons, and immediately gave Popeye a much more supple and ingratiating voice. Mercer, a Fleischer and Paramount story man, was the voice for other characters in the Popeye series: Poopdeck Pappy, Popeye's three nephews, and Wimpy (who was also voiced by *Lou Fleischer* and *Frank Matalone* before Mercer took over). Mercer also was the voice of Spooky, in the Casper series.

Bluto was voiced by several actors when the Popeye cartoons were in the hands of the Fleischers — *Gus Wicki, Pinto Colvig,* and *William Pennell* — but radio announcer *Jackson Beck* took the job permanently when the studio moved back to New York in the early '40's, after several years in Florida. Beck also was the voice of Buzzy the Crow, and of the villainous fox in the Baby Huey cartoons. Huey himself was voiced by *Syd Raymond,* who was also the voice of Katnip the cat in the Herman and Katnip series. Herman had the voice of *Arnold Stang,* who has been seen frequently in comic (and sometimes dramatic) roles in movies and television.

In the short-lived Fleischer Superman series, *Clayton (Bud) Collyer* played Superman, and *Joan Alexander* was Lois Lane, both repeating their radio roles. *Cecil Roy* played Little Lulu in that Paramount series. *Phil Kramer's* nasal Brooklyn voice was heard often in the Paramount cartoons, but rarely to full advantage. (Kramer was also heard in such Warner Bros. cartoons of the late '30's as *Ham-ateur Nite* and *Fagin's Freshman.*)

The Fleischers made two features, both filled with familiar

June Foray

June Foray has been the preeminent female voice artist for many years. Other women have done memorable voices over the years, but Foray's range and comic power put her at the top of the list. She was heard to especially good advantage in the Warner cartoons — she was Witch Hazel in several Chuck Jones cartoons, and played Granny in Friz Freleng's Tweety cartoons after Bea Benaderet had left the part — and in the Jay Ward TV series, Rocky and His Friends. *She is now in her sixth and final year as president of the Hollywood chapter of ASIFA, the international animation society, which has become active and widely respected under her leadership.*

Milt Gray interviewed June Foray on December 21, 1977; excerpts from that interview follow. M. B.

I started in radio when I was 12 years old. They were trying to save money at the time, and they said, "June, can you play a little old lady, besides playing the lead, or playing a little girl?" I said sure I could. Even if I thought I couldn't, I'd say yes, and it always turned out very well.

Being mercenarily inclined, I shopped for the comedy shows, because I was able to do all of the funny voices. By doing that, I received over scale. I did the Danny Thomas show every week, the Jimmy Durante show every week, I worked with Bob Hope and Jack Benny and Red Skelton. As a result, Capitol records heard about me. Alan Livingston, who is now the head of general entertainment at 20th Century Fox, was the A/R man at Capitol records, and he had heard about my versatility. He put Stan Freberg, Mel Blanc, Pinto Colvig, Daws Butler and me under five-year contracts, to do all of their children's albums. As a result, Disney's said, "Who is this June Foray? Maybe we ought to use her." They hired me, and I did quite a few theatrical shorts. One of the first films I did for them was *Trick or Treat* (1952), playing Witch Hazel; Jack Hannah directed. After that, I recorded *Peter Pan,* doing two of the mermaids and the old Indian squaw.

After I had recorded the mermaids and the old squaw, Jack Lavin, who was then the casting director, said, "June, we need you for another day. Would you come and bring your bathing suit?" He didn't elaborate. At that time, I was very young and had quite a devastating figure. I thought, "I'm too young for Jack Lavin, and he's too old for me, and why does he want me in a bathing suit?"

As it turned out, they were rotoscoping practically everybody on *Peter Pan.* They set aside a sound stage where they had constructed papier-mache rocks, and all kinds of boards with canvas on them. They tied our legs together and we had to slither down the rocks as a mermaid would, to jump into the water. So one of the mermaids in *Peter Pan* looks a little like me. I never had so many bruises in my life when I got home. Margaret Kerry was also in it; she was the girl who was the prototype for Tinker Bell. She and another girl and I were the models, also, for the mermaids.

In 1957, my agent called and said, "There's a man named Jay Ward — I don't know him, he's never worked for Disney's or Warners or MGM or UPA — and he would like you to do a series. They would like to make a demo film, and try to sell it. Would you be interested?" I said, "Of course, I'm always interested in something like that," I met [Jay Ward] at the Tail of the Cock, on La Cienega, and he was sitting at the bar. He bought me a couple of martinis before lunch, and I wasn't used to drinking before lunch. I was feeling very high in my martini glass by the time we had lunch, and I said, "I'll do it, I'll do it, for free even! I'll be happy to do the demo for you." We recorded the first demo in 1957 at Capitol Records, in one of their tiny little recording studios. Paul Frees, Bill Scott, and myself. This was just *Rocky and His Friends,* it had nothing to do with *Fractured Fairy Tales* or *Dudley Do-Right.*

They sold it, and we began recording in 1958. It became an enormous success, and we did 355, I believe, segments of the Bullwinkle show, [of about] three and a half minutes each.

We slipped into the characters so easily. I guess there was maybe a slight voice change from the very first ones we did to the later ones, but gradually, as you assume a character, you fall into such an easy slot of knowing precisely what to do. We'd read around the table, tell jokes, laugh at the funny dialogue — because it was brilliantly written — then we'd do it on mike for time, and [then record]. We finally recorded five segments in an hour, then just sat around and laughed and told jokes. It's remained a beautiful family; we're still doing Captain Crunch commercials.

Jay was always astute. I'd say, "What kind of voice do you want the princess to be [in a *Fractured Fairy Tale*]?" He'd say, "Brooklyn." I'd say, "Gee, I was Brooklyn in the last one, don't you want something different?" He'd say, "No, give us the Brooklyn." And he was always right. Daws was always the fag prince — Jay always wanted that — and usually, for the fairy godmother, he'd say, "All right, I want you to do the Marjorie Main-type voice." We thought, let's do all of our voices, different impersonations. But no, he wanted the same things; he was very precise in what he wanted, and he was correct.

We've all grown up together in the business, and we're still together. I've done practically all of the Chuck Jones specials, and I still work for Friz, at DePatie-Freleng. Much dialogue has gone under the bridgework, in all of these years.

Jack Mercer.

voices from the short subjects. In the first feature, *Gulliver's Travels* (1939), *Jack Mercer* played King Little and the royal chef. *Pinto Colvig*, late of Disney's, was Gabby the town crier (who also starred in a few shorts, again with Colvig's voice). *Ted Pierce*, who left the Schlesinger studio to work for the Fleischers in Florida, was King Bombo. Mercer, Colvig, and Pierce shared the voices of Sneak, Snoop, and Snitch, the three spies, and also such incidental voices as those of palace guards and villagers. The wooden romantic leads, Princess Glory and Prince David, were played by *Jessica Dragonette* and *Lanny Ross*. Gulliver himself was *Sam Parker*.

Mr. Bug Goes to Town followed Gulliver by two years, and again was heavy with familiar voices. *Mercer* returned as Mr. Bumble the bee and Swat the fly; *Pierce* was C. Bagley Beetle; and *Colvig* was Mr. Creepers. *Carl (Mike) Meyer*, like Mercer and Pierce a Fleischer story man, was Smack, Swat's mosquito companion.

Other voices: Dick Dickens, *Kenny Gardner;* Mary Dickens, *Gwen Williams;* Hoppity, *Stan Freed;* Honey Bee, *Pauline Loth;* Mrs. Ladybug, *Gwen Davies;* Buzz, *Mae Questel;* miscellaneous insects, Mercer, Colvig, Davies, Questel, and Pierce.

Columbia and UPA

Little is known of the voices for the Columbia cartoons of the '30's and '40's, which were made by the Mintz (later Screen Gems) studio. It is known, however, that *Jack Carr* (the same animator who was Buddy's voice at the Schlesinger studio) was the voice for Krazy Kat in some cartoons. *Frank Graham* and then *Paul Frees* were voices for the Fox and the Crow.

UPA took over the Columbia release in 1948, and it was the next year that *Jim Backus* made his debut as the voice of Mr. Magoo — a role that has been his for 30 years. Magoo's nephew, Waldo, was played by *Jerry Hausner*, who had been providing voices for UPA's non-theatrical cartoons for several years. (*Daws Butler* later took Waldo's part when Hausner spent several years in Europe.) Hausner also was Pete Hothead in the cartoon of that title.

The UPA cartoons generally relied more on narrators than on character voices: *Marvin Miller* narrated many UPA cartoons (e.g., *Gerald McBoing Boing*, 1951). *James Mason* narrated one of the most famous, *The Tell-tale Heart* (1953), and *Gladys Holland* narrated *Madeline* (1952).

Terrytoons

The Terry studio, probably more than any other, relied on in-house voices, and in particular the voice of *Tom Morrison*, the head story man. Morrison provided the speaking voice of Mighty Mouse (whose singing voice was that of *Roy Halee*), and the voices of Little Roquefort, Sourpuss, Percy the cat, Dimwit the dog, and one of the Terry Bears (the other was voiced by *Philip A. Scheib*, Terrytoons' musical director for more than 20 years). Morrison was a voice for Heckle and Jeckle; *Dayton Allen* and Roy Halee also voiced the two magpies. *Douglas Moye* played the Terry Bears' father; he was a cameraman for the Terry studio. *Arthur Haye* was Gandy Goose.

With the change in ownership from Paul Terry to CBS in 1955, there was a concomitant change from in-house to outside professional voices. For example, *Boris Karloff* narrated *The Juggler Of Our Lady* (1957). *Lionel Wilson*, Dayton Allen, and *Bob MacFadden* were the voices for the bulk of the Terrytoons characters in the late '50's and early '60's.

The Walter Lantz Cartoons

Woody Woodpecker is easily the most famous Lantz character, and his first voice was that of *Mel Blanc*. It was, however, after only a few Woody cartoons that Blanc was signed to an exclusive contract by the Schlesinger studio, and he had to withdraw as Woody's voice. *J. B. (Bugs) Hardaway*, a Lantz story man (he had been at Schlesinger's when the first Bugs Bunny cartoons were made), filled in for a while but Blanc's permanent replacement was *Grace Stafford*, Walter Lantz's wife. Gracie Lantz also did some other voices over the years, including Miranda Panda, Bessie Beary, and Winnie Woodpecker.

The first Lantz character for Universal Studios was inherited from Walt Disney: Oswald the Rabbit, whose voice at one point was provided by *Mickey Rooney*, before he became famous as a juvenile lead. *Bernice Hansen*, she of the small, cute voices, also spoke for Oswald.

Andy Panda, the next Lantz character of consequence, spoke at first with the voice of the versatile *Sarah Berner*, and later — after he had grown into a teenaged character — with the voice of *Walter Tetley*, a radio actor who played such characters as the Great Gildersleeve's nephew, Leroy. Mel Blanc was the voice of Andy's father in the first few Andy Panda cartoons, and he was also the voice of Bucky Beaver. *Burt Gillett*, the director of the Li'l Eight Ball cartoons in the late '30's, was Eight Ball's voice. Wally Walrus was voiced by both *Hans Conried* and *Paul Frees*.

In the Lantz cartoons of the '50's, almost all of the voices were drawn from the basic stable of performers at that time.

June Foray was Knothead and Splinter; *Daws Butler* was Windy and Breezy, Gabby Gator, Smedley and Chilly Willy; *Dallas McKennon* was Buzz Buzzard, Sugarfoot, Inspector Willoughby (a role he shared with Butler), and a host of incidental voices; and *Paul Frees* was Charlie Beary and Junior. *Johnny Coons* was Space Mouse.

Jack Mercer

Jack Mercer was born to a show-business family; his parents were members of a traveling company that performed melodramas throughout the Middle West. Mercer himself made his stage debut as a baby, crying "on cue" when the actress who was carrying him pinched his bottom. Later his mother and his aunt performed in vaudeville in New York, and Mercer himself tried to put together a vaudeville act before he went to work for the Fleischer studio. He began at Fleischer's by opaquing (i.e., painting) cels.

In an interview Mercer and I recorded on February 5, 1976, he explained how he rose from opaquing to become the voice for one of the world's most famous cartoon characters. M. B.

Mercer: I was in the inking department when I first started to supply voices for the character I was inking at the time. Everybody would laugh, and the head of the department would ask me to cool it, so they could get some work done.

One day a woman came to the studio and she had a high voice that could be heard in our inking department because the partitions were open at the top. The talking stopped and I thought the visitor had come and gone. Then I started to imitate that voice until someone told me that it was Max Fleischer's wife and that she had gone into Max's office! Needless to say, I spent the rest of the day in a hot sweat awaiting a pink slip.

So many people want credit for suggesting that I try out for the Popeye voice and truthfully it is vague to me. So I'll try to explain my version of it.

After I had been in the in-between department for awhile, I started imitating the Popeye voice — which was close but not the real thing. Someone, I don't know who, spoke to Lou Fleischer about it. He approached me about trying out for the voice. I don't know if Dave Fleischer was aware of my potential at this point. I didn't think I did it well enough.

I don't know how long it took, but I used to go home and practice the voice after work. Suddenly one night my voice seemed to crack and I felt that I had at last gotten the right tone and quality for the Popeye voice. The next day I informed them that I thought I could do the voice. Dave and Lou had me audition over the phone to someone at Paramount. It might have been Dick Diamond — I'm not sure. A short time after that I started to do some incidental voices on some of the cartoons as a breaking-in period. Then one day I was informed that I was going to do a Popeye cartoon.

I changed the character quite a bit; I didn't make it quite as gruff. He [William Costello — Red Pepper Sam — the original Popeye voice] was very militant at times. I saw Popeye as a kindly character until he was forced to turn the tables on his opponent leaving him in a ridiculous or embarrassing predicament, giving him his just desserts in a humorous way.

Barrier: Why were they getting rid of Costello? Were they dissatisfied with the voice, or was he asking for too much money, or —?

Mercer: I really don't know, exactly. Your guess is as good as mine.

Barrier: When you began doing voices, did you remain in the in-between department? Were you called out of the in-between department to do voices?

Mercer: Yes I was — and a short time after that, I transferred to their story department, because I was adding ad libs [in Popeye's dialogue]. And then they had a house organ [the *Animated News*], for which I wrote several articles. I guess that might have influenced them in thinking that I had some ability in that line. But, of course, writing cartoons at that time required a lot of sight gags; not so much dialogue. So with my background this was right down my alley.

Barrier: I wanted to ask you about the muttering and the ad libs . . . what led to your doing that? Do you recall the circumstances? It's such a unique thing.

Mercer: I must say that the other guy did a little bit of it, but it was to the point where you [couldn't understand it]; I think he forgot his lines, or something. So I used that as a means of putting in funny lines.

Barrier: Did you actually ad lib, or was it written out?

Mercer: Sometimes a funny line might occur to you after a take and you'd make a note of it for the next take. In the old days, we used to record everything at once; there was no pre-recording of these things. They ran the picture and we had to do the lines as the picture ran. They used this system with the bouncing ball for our cues. In between where the actual lines were written, we would ad lib lines to fill it up.

Barrier: The mouths had been animated to specific dialogue.

Mercer: Yes.

Barrier: Sometimes the animation doesn't look that specific . . .

Mercer: I don't think they figured that was quite as important. They had several charts of mouth openings and closings, and I think they all just followed the vowels and the consonants . . .

Barrier: And they didn't have your voice to listen to, to get expression into —

Mercer: That's right; they just read the line themselves, and animated to it.

Barrier: The ad lib muttering ended, didn't it, about the time the Fleischers left in 1941? Was there a deliberate decision to go to fully synchronized dialogue?

Mercer: I vaguely recall that the change took place sometime when they began to pre-record the dialogue. Someone at Paramount wanted mouth action for all the dialogue — including the ad libs. So then I'd select certain lines in the script that I would convert into ad libs and read in the muttering, sotto voice. No doubt that this took away the feeling of spontaneity that the old cartoons had.

I don't actually remember stopping it all together. When the TV cartoons were made, they had all of these various people doing stories, and they were all timed, and we had to do nine of them, or eight, or seven, and there was no time, really, to think of anything. The only thing I could do would be to take a line that had been written straight and do it in an ad lib voice, but without having a chance to convert is as a typical ad lib. An ad lib line was supposed to be somebody thinking out loud; and since there was so much dialogue in these later pictures, there really wasn't much chance to put that type of thing in. The old pictures had a lot of action to them, so you felt like you had the opportunity just to add some thought to a gag, before it was done, or after it was done.

Barrier: Do you recall roughly how long it was after you started doing Popeye's voice that they stopped post-recording and started pre-recording?

Mercer: I can't say for certain. It might have been [at the time of the Fleischers' move to Miami in 1938] that we made the change; we had our own sound stage down there.

Grace Stafford Lantz, the voice of Woody Woodpecker, and her husband, Walter Lantz, the producer of the Woody cartoons.

A Word on Other Studios

Some studios have been left out entirely so far, and they should be mentioned in passing. Pinning down voice credits for the Iwerks and Van Beuren studios of the early '30's would be difficult, to say the least, although Van Beuren deserves recognition for a very early use of "star voices" in its Amos and Andy cartoon, *The Rasslin' Match* (1933); *Freeman Gosden* and *Charles Correll*, the radio voices of Amos and Andy, also spoke for the cartoon characters.

George Pal's Puppetoons of the '40's used the voices of cartoon performers; *Billy Bletcher* can be heard in *The Little Broadcast* (1942), for example. *Stan Freberg* received voice credit for *It's a Grand Old Nag* (1947), the lone cartoon that Bob Clampett made for Republic.

The listing of voices could go on much longer. One might include the voices for John and Faith Hubley's cartoons, which range from Dizzy Gillespie to their own children. Hubley anticipated the Disney studio's later use of star voices when he recorded the soundtrack for an animated version of *Finian's Rainbow* in the '50's; Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald were among the voices for the film, which was never made. In the early '60's, UPA made *Gay Purr-ee*, an all-star feature voiced by the likes of Robert Goulet and Judy Garland.

In recent years, there has been a virtual explosion of voices, both in animated features and in television cartoons. Listing all such credits would be a daunting task — and not very rewarding, since the voices are frequently the only saving graces of otherwise misbegotten films.

But beyond any doubt, this article has left unexplored many aspects of cartoon voice work that deserve attention. For example, voice recording has always been a haphazard affair in some respects; one actor might record a role, and then another actor be called in to record a few additional lines, if the first actor was no longer available. (That is why there are two voice credits for the scullery maid in *Sword in the Stone*, for instance.) It would be interesting to know how such logistical problems in voice recording have affected the production of the cartoons themselves. Such questions may be taken up in a near-future issue of *Funnyworld*, in a follow-up article.

Acknowledgments

Many people assisted in the compilation of data and in the writing of this article. *Bob Clampett* deserves special mention for tracking down the late Joe Dougherty, whose identity as the original Porky Pig voice would otherwise have gone unrecognized. Others who have helped to identify voices include *David R. Smith* of the Walt Disney Archives, *Joan Gardner*, the late *Billy Gilbert*, *Mrs. Billy Gilbert*, *Gladys Holland*, *Mark Kausler*, *Walter Lantz*, the late *Frank Tashlin*, and *Walter Tetley*.

Jerry Hausner

Jerry Hausner has been in show business for a half century. He majored in art in high school in Cleveland and designed sets for plays. He became the stage manager for a stock company, and played his first part when one of the actors failed to show up. He later worked in vaudeville, learning about trick voices from a ventriloquist and a clown who imitated a baby's crying. Years later, Hausner was the voice of Lucille Ball's baby on I Love Lucy. *He described his career in animation in a letter to Mike Barrier.*

Jim Backus and Jerry Hausner (1948).

I came to Hollywood in 1937, and did radio shows as well as films, cartoon voices, and plays until I enlisted in the Army, in 1942. John Hubley asked me to do the voice of the leading character in *Brotherhood of Man* (1947). We became good friends, and he frequently consulted me about the casting of voices at UPA.

When he started production of Mister Magoo, he said to me, "Who do you know that can do a voice for this near-sighted little man, and above all, *not* sound like W. C. Fields?" Jim Backus was my immediate choice. He was a most versatile and inventive talent, and their meeting proved to be a historic event.

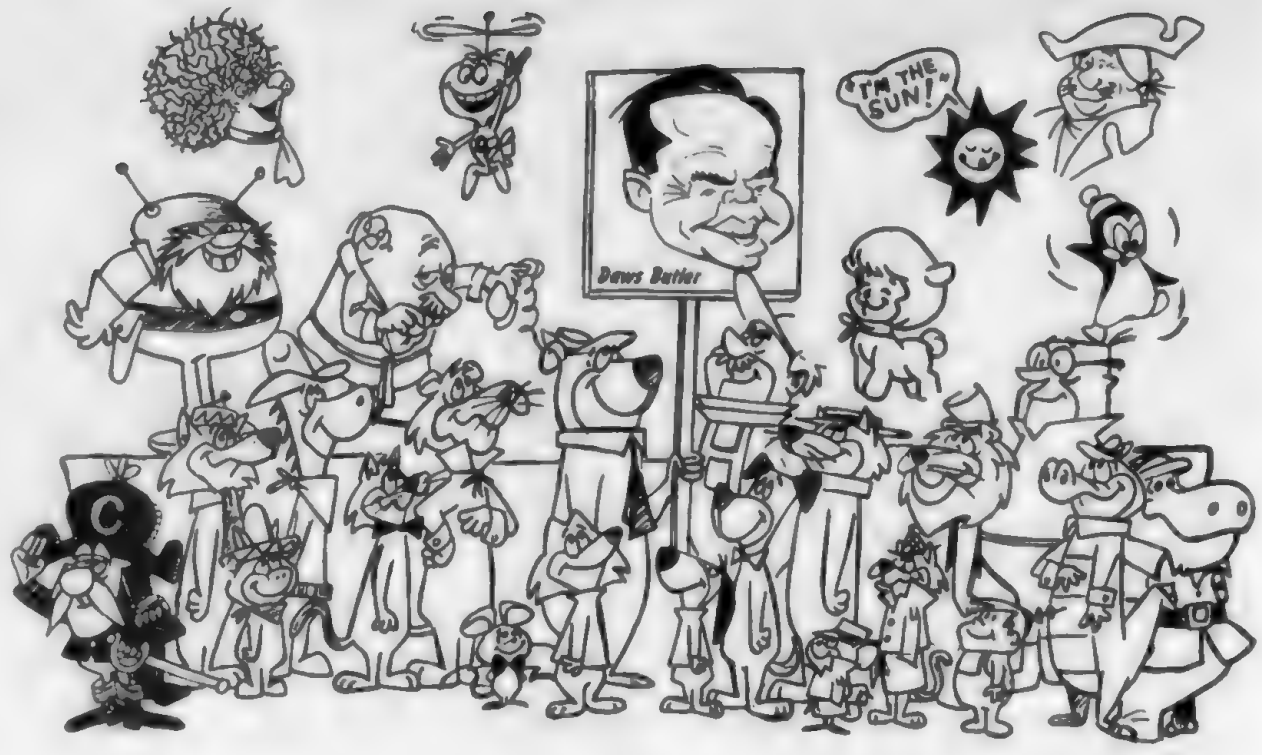
These two men respected each other and admired each other, so it was a perfect blending of talents. I played Waldo, Magoo's stupid nephew, so I was present at all the early recording sessions. Hubley felt it was important for Backus to have someone to play to, rather than to record in an empty studio. I was his best audience, so after Hub showed us the storyboard and explained the action, we'd spend an hour enjoying ourselves, elaborating the simple lines that were written. A good deal of what finally went into each picture was the result of Backus' improvisations. All the silly little songs, the asides, mutterings and mumblings that made the Magoo character so rich, were things that Jim Backus ad-libbed on the spot.

We were paid $50 each for the session. After the first Magoo film, *Ragtime Bear* (1949), was completed, it was announced there would be five more to do that year. Naturally, Backus wanted more money. Hubley called me in despair, "Backus is threatening to quit unless we give him more money. Help me explain there isn't any more to give!" Finally, Backus was convinced it was to his advantage to settle for individual screen credit on a single frame — his name in capital letters, all alone on a theater screen, appealed to him. His instinct was right. In the long run, it helped his career considerably. But at the time, in actual cash, we each earned $300 a year.

We all felt that Hubley was a true genius. He had a clear vision of what he wanted on the screen. He was not afraid to make decisions, and he made the most of whatever was available. No tedious, humiliating auditions for actors. His recording sessions were short, everyone worked hard, anxious to contribute to the success of the whole picture. We did other animated films together, including the ill-fated *Finian's Rainbow*, a feature using the voices of everyone from Sinatra, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald and a whole lot of other names, down to us ordinary "voices." One of the early TV commercials Jim Backus and I voiced for Hub was "It's a FOOOOOORDDDD." But no residuals in those days, and we wound up with 50 bucks!

Pete Burness, who took over after Hubley left, was a kindly, quiet, patient man, and while he didn't have Hubley's flair, it was a pleasure to work with him. He encouraged us to write a script for Magoo based on a wild idea by Backus. We did, and it turned out to be one of the better ones — *Destination Magoo*, (1954), a science-fiction moonshot satire, long before the actual trip to the moon took place.

Daws Butler



Daws Butler grew up in a suburb of Chicago, and originally wanted to be a cartoonist. He began his career in show business during the Depression, winning amateur contests at neighborhood theaters by doing impressions of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rudy Vallee, and a Model T Ford. He teamed with two other young men to form an act called "The Three Short Waves"; they did impressions of radio personalities. The act played night clubs and supper clubs throughout the Midwest. After service in the Naval Reserve during World War II, Butler moved to California and picked up radio parts before spending several years doing voices and handling puppets for Bob Clampett's Time for Beany *series. He has since written and voiced countless television commercials (he is the voice of Captain Crunch, for example), and conducts a workshop for aspiring actors and writers. All of this is in addition to his voice work for theatrical and television cartoons.*

Milt Gray interviewed Daws Butler on March 20, 1976; excerpts from that interview follow. M. B.

I went in to see Johnny Burton at Warner Bros. Cartoons, when it used to be on Sunset Boulevard, just a block east of Gower. I walked into his office one day, just cold — because I'd seen cartoons, and I thought it'd be a kick; I'd never done any. This was about 1946, or maybe '47, somewhere in there. I auditioned right in front of him, at the desk, and did about 25 different characters, every dialect and character I could think of. He seemed to be impressed; he said, "Gee, that's great, but Mel does everything. But I tell you what — why don't you call a guy at MGM named Tex Avery, and tell him that I suggested you go out there and see him." I didn't even know who the hell Tex Avery was. I knew who Mel Blanc was; that was about it. And barely that, because I hadn't seen that many movies when I was in the service, and Mel hadn't started that many years before.

I did go out to see Tex at MGM. He entered a little studio theater, and I went into what they had for a control room — it was like a storeroom, with stuff piled all over. He sat in the theater, and I got on mike, and I must have worked for 40 minutes, doing everything I could think of. I was ad-libbing. Four or five different types of English character — Scotch, Irish, cockney, Russian, Polish, Southern, old men, little kids. Then, when I came out, he seemed to be suitably impressed, and the next morning I got a call for a cartoon. I wasn't even a member of the Screen Actors Guild, only AFTRA, which covered radio. So I called up Screen Actors Guild, and said I had a firm commitment for a job, and went down and paid my dues, or whatever, and went out to see Tex, on the big recording stage at MGM, and did my first cartoon.

I did probably six or seven or maybe more cartoons for Tex; I don't think I'd even met Bill [Hanna] and Joe [Barbera] at that time. I did get a call from them when they'd maybe have a part in a Tom and Jerry, when you'd only see the legs and the guy'd say, "Now, Tom, I want you to take care of the house while I'm gone . . ." — little things that, they used to do. But they became aware of me.

Tex loved my Southern voice, and tried for a year to come up with a character for it. He finally did; it was a wolf who looked very menacing, and he played with the three little Droopys. We may have had only six lines in the whole cartoon, but each one was a blockbuster. It was like *Three Little Pigs*, and you see the wolf start out at the beginning with the net, and the car with "dogcatcher" on the back, and a mean look on his face; and you've seen the little [Droopys] before, and they've built their house, and [the wolf] goes up to the house, and pounds on the door — just pounds, no voice, no dialogue as yet — and finally he's pounding with a battering ram, shoots cannon balls against it — nothing. His first line — and it was [in a voice] different from Huck, [although] Huck was an outgrowth of that — was, "Man, I wanna tell you somethin' right now, that thar's a well-built doghouse."

They were going to make a whole series of "wolf" cartoons but then MGM [the cartoon studio] went under.

Tex was a marvelous guy to learn the business with. He was the first brilliant [director] I ever worked for, and he's such a fussy man. This was before they had tape, and everybody was afraid of wasting film, so he would rehearse me, and rehearse me, and rehearse me, until I wouldn't have any voice left. There would be yells — he loved yells. I don't know if he invented the gag, but he sure used it a lot, where the guy hits his thumb with a hammer or something, then looks up and it says, "Hospital Zone — Quiet," and he runs over hill and dale, into the distance, and goes YEOWW! A yell is a yell, and I do pretty good yells, but he would have me do about eight of these, then he would say, "Gee, that's close." Then he'd say, "Well, let's lay one down," then we'd do it on the film. Then he would always throw in a couple himself, just for protection.

Tex would always rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. [The film on which the dialogue was recorded] should have been running all the time; then you could have gone back and gotten some beautiful readings. Like with the wolf, each time I'd do it it would have a different flavor.

Bill Thompson had done Droopy, and done it very well, [but] he was in New York, or was out of town, or wasn't available when they wanted to do something, and so Tex said, "Do you know anybody who can do a voice like that? Could you do it?" I said, "I could hold my cheeks, and I could approximate it, but I do know a guy who can do it very well, and his name is Don Messick." I'd met Don at one of the radio schools. Don went out and did Droopy's voice, and they liked it, so Don just took over and did the Droopys whenever they had them. He did other characters for Tex, and I think Bill and Joe used him. When it came time for Hanna and Barbera to leave MGM, they called me, and they called Don Messick, because we were what I call thinking, inventive actors. They called us in to do a show they were planning called *Ruff and Reddy*.

[The *Ruff and Reddy* segments] were three and a half or four-minute cartoons, interspersed with a couple of old Columbia cartoons — the Fox and the Crow, things like that. Bill and Joe wanted to get their own cartoons, because they weren't too fond of the available old-timers, and thought they could better them. So they came up with the idea of Huckleberry Hound, who was based on my Southern character.

An Art Carney dog I had done a couple of times for Bill and Joe became Yogi Bear; of course, I went far beyond Art Carney — the extended vowels, the expansiveness, exuberance, diaphragm control, ebullience, and the bigness, the massiveness of a bear. Another voice, a nebbish type thing, became Mr. Jinks, and Pixie and Dixie were Don and I. That started the ball rolling, except that Kellogg got wind of this. We were doing *Ruff and Reddy* for Post Cereals and Reddy was a dog, with a Southern accent, as was Huckleberry Hound. Kellogg wanted to make a star of Huck so there was kind of a tiff between the two cereal companies. It finally ended up where Post just bowed out of the picture, and Kellogg became the giant.

We did cartoons for five years, with three shows, *The Huckleberry Hound Show*, *The Yogi Bear Show*, and *The Quick Draw McGraw Show*. They were [in] prime time; they had big audiences. There was sharp writing; Mike Maltese was writing then, and Warren Foster, the old Warner Bros. guys. Don and I were doing really funny, well-developed characters, because they had to depend about 80 per cent on the voice; there was no animation, really. It was a very affluent time, and, to me, the Golden Age of limited animation, because of the good writing, the good voices, and what animation was affordable.

Then Jay Ward came along about the same time, with *Fractured Fairy Tales* and *Aesop and Son*, with Charlie Ruggles and Edward Everett Horton; and those were classics. Bill Scott was writing, and Allen Burns, who's the producer of the *Mary Tyler Moore* show. We would break up, just on our cold readings.

It was so beautiful the way it used to be. Like, Tex would call me out, and he'd say, "This is the character," then you'd go over and do it. You didn't have 30 people to audition with, to get the part [as is common today]. With Bill and Joe, the same way. Maybe they'd call you the day before, and you'd see the script, and you'd do it the next morning, or something like that. You might start out on a little character, and the director would say, "How would that sound if it was just a little bit textured?" And you'd start talking with your lips, and get a textured sound. "How about if his voice kind of breaks, what would that do?" But you build it, you've constructed it right there, with [the director's] ideas, and yours, and hit or miss, maybe you come up with something.

When you read for something, normally you do a couple of readings, and that's it. But if you could be there five more minutes, you might come up with exactly the thing that they want. Sometimes I blame the writing, where the writing isn't good enough even to give the production supervisor an idea of what he's looking for. He doesn't know; he may hear it. You get a guy like Sterling Holloway to come in and read something, you've got Sterling Holloway; that's going to be it. You're not going to get a dialect [or any other variations]. But when you've got a talented, versatile actor, there are so many ways you can go. Now, I give two or three readings and let it go at that. There was a time when I was so anxious to show what I could do, I just got them confused.

Don Messick.

You want your peers to like what you did. It's like a guy walks up and he says, "That picture didn't really make it, but that thing you did in it was so good." That's great. Like people in the business say, "I loved Jinks; I loved the looseness, and the way you worked." I've always loved Jinks, so that's very flattering to me; whereas a lot of people might like Yogi Bear, just because he was a bigger character. But to me, Yogi Bear is a good example of a "cartoony" character.

I don't consider Joe Barbera a flexible director; he had preconceived ideas which I would mimic — but there was no bone or marrow — I felt like an automaton. I remember in the early days of Yogi Bear, I had a lot of the Art Carney cadence which I gradually eliminated. [Daws demonstrated how the same line could be delivered with a strong Art Carney rhythm and with a more flexible, subtle rhythm.] Joe would say, "No, keep the [Art Carney] rhythm." I figure, why? That's a rhythmic pattern — it's not my conception of Yogi. A guy could conceivably talk like that, but it's pretty remote. When I do a character — it grows — it has a life of its own. I would do it his way, then I'd see the cartoon, and it'd be embarrassing; it [would be] the same thing [i.e., the same rhythm] over and over. [Daws delivered another line in the second, subtler voice for Yogi.] Now it gets away from Art Carney, it has become Yogi Bear, it's a new character. It was suggested by Art Carney. But he [Joe Barbera] was trying to hold right to the cadence. He wanted a "voice." I wanted a character. And he didn't understand Jinks at all; so that was great. He didn't know how to direct me with ole Jinksy.

©Walt Disney Productions

Leigh Harline, Walt Disney and Frank Churchill.

Symphonists for the Sillies

The Composers for Disney's Shorts

By ROSS CARE

During the Golden Age of animated short films at the Disney studio — the 1930's — no one except Walt Disney received screen credit. Detailed credits were, of course, attached to all of Disney's animated features, but credits were not listed on the animated shorts until *The Plastics Inventor,* a 1944 Donald Duck. Unfortunate in every case, the credit omissions are particularly so for the composers, who (especially with the Silly Symphonies) played such an integral role in the creation and ultimate success of the films. From the very first of Disney's sound films, music was always crucial in all phases of a short's production. Indeed, during the early and mid-30's, the director customarily worked closely with a film's composer. Though the popularity of some songs derived from the shorts (such as "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf" from *Three Little Pigs*) guaranteed the Disney studio composers a degree of public recognition denied to the animators and directors, little is actually known about the men responsible for some of the most inventive and charming music ever to emerge from Hollywood. With the success of *Steamboat Willie,* the first Mickey Mouse short in 1928, the Disney studio developed a musical staff that grew along with the rest of the studio, reaching its peak of creativity as Disney's operations shifted into feature production in the late '30's.

The studio's initial composer-in-residence and music director was Carl Stalling. Stalling was originally music director for the Isis Theater in Kansas City, where he played organ and piano besides conducting the theater's orchestra. It was in Kansas City in the early '20s that Disney produced and had exhibited some of his earliest commercial films. During their initial working acquaintance Disney provided Stalling with at least one simple "song film": a short subject that contained the words for the song "Martha" (with Stalling furnishing live accompaniment) as well as appropriate embellishing visuals. (This primitive collaboration may be considered the earliest manifestation of Disney's interest in linking music to visual imagery.) After Disney left Kansas City, it was also Stalling who loaned him the money to start his first Hollywood studio where the "Alice" comedies, a series of silent shorts that placed a live-action young girl amidst animated characters and settings, were produced. In 1928, in the wake of correspondence concerning a musical director for Disney's initial ventures into sound filmmaking, Disney once again met with Stalling in Kansas City while en route to New York to record the soundtrack to *Steamboat Willie* (its score mainly put together by Walt himself and Wilfred Jackson, an animator and later director).

Disney left behind with Stalling the prints of two Mickey Mouse films that had been produced as silents (*Steamboat Willie* being actually the third in the Mickey series, but the first to get a synchronized soundtrack). Stalling scored these two films in Kansas City, then went to join Disney in New York for the recording of *Gallopin' Gaucho* and *Plane Crazy,* and to witness the Colony Theater premiere of *Willie.* Stalling had done no actual composing up to that point, but observed that he had "improvised at the theater, and that's

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Ross Care writes frequently on film music, and has composed the score for John Canemaker's film on Otto Messmer and Felix the Cat.

composing but not writing it down." After making the eventual move to Hollywood, Stalling composed the scores for about 15 Mickey shorts and Silly Symphonies.

It was in fact Stalling who suggested the concept for Disney's second series of shorts, the Silly Symphonies, films intended to showcase more fluid, coherent, and self-contained scores than did the Mickey series, in which music was (generally) more fragmented and subordinate to plot and characterization. In an interview with Mike Barrier and Milton Gray in a 1971 issue of *Funnyworld*, Stalling recalled the circumstances that engendered the second series:

"After two or three of the Mickeys had been completed and were being run in theaters, Walt talked with me about getting started on the musical series that I had in mind. He thought I meant illustrated songs, but I didn't have that in mind at all. When I told him that I was thinking of inanimate figures such as skeletons, trees, flowers, etc., coming to life and dancing and doing other animated action, fitted to music more or less in a humorous and rhythmic mood, he became very much interested.

"For a name or title for the series, I suggested *not* using the word 'music' or 'musical' as it sounded too commonplace, but to use the word 'symphony' together with a humorous word. At the next gag meeting, I don't know who suggested it, but Walt asked me: 'Carl, how would *'Silly Symphony'* sound to you? I said 'perfect!' Then I suggested the first subject, *Skeleton Dance*, because ever since I was a kid I had wanted to see real skeletons dancing and had always enjoyed seeing skeleton-dancing acts in vaudeville. And as kids, we all liked spooky pictures and stories. The music I composed was mainly original; that was 40 years ago and I can't remember if I used anything else or not. But it wasn't Saint-Saens' *Danse Macabre*, although some writers have said it was."

In the same interview Stalling commented that sometimes Disney would request that he compose music that "sounded like" something else that was unobtainable because of copyright restrictions; in the case of *Skeleton Dance*, Stalling's score sounds nothing like the Saint-Saens composition (though it does follow the basic program — based on a poem by Henri Cazalis — employed by the Frenchman for *Danse Macabre*), evoking the nocturnal frolics of a group of skeletons who, roused by the 12 chimes of midnight, dance through the graveyard until driven back underground by the cock's call at sunrise.

Stalling described his music as a kind of "fox trot in a minor key," the fox trot being a standard cut-time dance tempo of the '20's. The only thing remotely reminiscent of the Saint-Saens piece is Stalling's use of a xylophone to simulate the rattling of the skeletal celebrants. As a whole, the form of the cartoon is that of an Introduction and Allegro, rendered visually as well as musically. Both film and score commence with a drolly lugubrious bit of atmosphere: with the audience jolted to attention by white flash-frames of "lightning," establishing shots alternately depict a devilishly droll horned owl, a moaning hound, and finally the graveyard itself, while the score jokingly plays around with a musical suspense figure that must have been a cliche even in 1928: the

BOOOOM bom
bom bom
bom bom
bom bom bom

motive. Xylophone, castanets, and brittle-sounding temple blocks add a touch of orchestral color to the black and white visuals, as a single skeleton appears at the stroke of midnight, soon to be joined by his companions. Succinctly established and resolved, the parodistically sinister mood is broken by the initial main theme, a pseudo-Oriental bit of rhythmic grotesquerie (in the guise of the minor-mode fox trot) announcing the beginning of the organized choreography. A catchy, tuneful piece of period dance music, the jaunty tune in the lower register of a solo clarinet is accompacied by the round, oily tones of a marimba, which lends an oddly contemporary sound to the music. A major-mode interlude is heard as the dancers momentarily and campily pirouette before the minor-key theme returns. With little plot, the short mostly highlights Ub Iwerks' clever animation of the skeletal capering. For the dance's second phase, in which one skeleton puts another into service as a xylophone, Stalling incorporates Edward Grieg's piano composition, *The March of the Dwarfs*, specifically arranged for the modest instrumentation used throughout, and this piece supplies musical support for much of the short which is, musically and visually, quite concentrated. A brief, music-less interval succeeds the Grieg adaptation, and at the shrill report of the cock's crow, the film culminates in a frantic coda, based on the Grieg tune, the skeletons returning pell-mell to their graves.

Carl Stalling.

Stalling's scoring is apt for this "primitive" period in Disney's career. Though he frequently composed original music for these early films, much of Stalling's work as musical director consisted of fitting public-domain tunes to the dramatic demands of the cartoon "plots" (he would do the same for many of the more than 600 shorts for which he later composed scores at Warner Brothers). For a 1929 Mickey short, *When the Cat's Away*, which portrays a Mickey and Minnie tiny enough to dance on a piano keyboard (instead of playing one), the score is primarily a collection of familiar PD tunes — "Farmer in the Dell," "Listen to the Mockingbird," "Ach, Du Lieber Augustine," "Home Sweet Home," — briefly essayed by the mouse couple and their many cohorts in gagged-up renditions, and intercut with periods of silence and sound effects. The "sound" of this early period in Disney history is distinguished by its spotlighting of Stalling's straightforward but deft piano playing and the "Mickey Mouse"-sounding percussion ensemble (including wood blocks and xylophone), along with the intrinsically musical gags that were always a prime component of Disney's cartoon work. At one point, and without the aid of recording tricks (all of Stalling's music for Disney was recorded in a single take, long before the advent of tape and the mixing of tracks), the music cleverly approximates the sound of an antique wind-up Victrola that is gradually running out of steam.

Carl Stalling left the Disney studio, along with Ub Iwerks, in January 1930. He worked with Iwerks' own unsuccess-

Courtesy of Marcellite Lincoln and the Bob Clampett Collection; ©W. D. P.

Bert Lewis, the Disney studio's second music director, is at the right in this photo from the early '30's, with director Burt Gillet (left) and Walt Disney.

ful studio for six months, then returned to Disney for a short period in 1932 to do free-lance recording and arranging work. (It is Stalling we hear playing when the Practical Pig is at the keyboard in *Three Little Pigs.*)

With the departure of Stalling as musical director in 1930, Bert Lewis filled the post and composed music for 25 shorts between 1930 and 1935, among them *Pioneer Days,* (his initial score, a 1930 Mickey Mouse), *Babes in the Woods, King Neptune, Mickey's Fire Brigade,* and *The Moose Hunt.* The studio's music department was enlarged by the additions of Frank Churchill in 1931 and Leigh Harline in 1932. These three composers produced most of the scores for the Disney shorts during the first half of the 1930's, with Churchill and Harline remaining with the studio until the early '40's and the successful transition from shorts to feature scoring.

The second half of the '30's would see the addition of several other composers. Al Malotte (who as Albert Hay Malotte composed the definitive musicalization of "The Lord's Prayer," as well as an assortment of contemporary art songs) worked at the studio from 1935 to 1939 and composed for 15 shorts, including a number of classics, among them *Brave Little Tailor, Ferdinand the Bull, Moving Day,* and *The Ugly Ducking.* His work was generally sophisticated, facile, and technically well crafted and orchestrated, if lacking the warmth, immediacy, and intangible melodic charm of that of Churchill and Harline, and sounding rather like the latter on a slightly off day. Among his most appealing works are *Little Hiawatha,* a Silly whose plot is presented entirely through florid orchestral music and a voice-over narration in verse, and *Moth and the Flame,* an extremely elaborate, feature-like Silly whose visual scheme anticipates the detailed Old World design of *Pinocchio* and whose soundtrack is entirely orchestral, with no spoken dialogue or narration at all. (The short is also interesting for its somewhat Fleischeresque character styling.)

Two other composers joined the music department during this time and both remained with the studio for several decades: Paul Smith and Oliver Wallace. Smith composed the music for 70 shorts from 1936 till 1953 (first providing supplemental scoring for Churchill and Harline and later providing complete scores for the later '40's and '50's shorts), then went on to score Disney's TV shows and theatrical features and featurettes,' including the "True Life Adventure" series, for which he applied cartoon scoring techniques to live-action nature footage, a strategy that paradoxically enhanced and trivialized the often spectacular nature photography. His final feature work was on *The Three Lives of Thomasina* in 1963. During the '30's and '40's he also assisted in the composition, orchestration, and general music direction of many features, including *Snow White, Pinocchio, The Three Caballeros,* and *Melody Time.*

Oliver Wallace served in a similar capacity in the 1930's, but came into his own in the early '40's, when he composed music for two of the charming songs in *Dumbo* (including the brilliant "Pink Elephants" number), plus songs and music for a number of Disney's better-known World War II propaganda films, notably *Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943), the title tune of which was a considerable hit. In the late '40's and early '50's Wallace provided the complete scores for many Donald Ducks (including the great *Tea for Two Hundred* music in 1948), and also supplied the incidental background scores for Disney's features in that period. His scores were often of a higher quality than the efforts of the "Top Ten" composers whom Disney recruited for songwriting. It was Wallace who composed the music for the Headless Horseman sequence in *Ichabod and Mr. Toad* (1949), the music and song for the famous Caterpillar episode, the haunting Tulgy Wood sequence and other background music for *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), two songs and various background music and themes for *Peter Pan* (1953), and background orchestral music for *Lady and the Tramp* (1955).

Wallace, who was born in London in 1887, was reputed to have been the first musician ever to use the pipe organ as an interpretative instrument for accompanying silent films (in Seattle, Washington, in 1910). He moved to Hollywood to score films in 1930, joining Disney in 1936 and remaining (while contributing to 147 shorts between 1937 and 1956) with the studio until his death in 1963. Though he was the source of an estimable body of work at Disney's, Wallace's impressive talents as a composer (exemplified by his delightful contributions to the *Dumbo, Alice,* and *Peter Pan* scores) were perhaps never employed as cannily as they might have been, especially in the light of the declining quality of the vocal scores for some of the later Disney features.

It was Frank Churchill who was unquestionably the studio's first major music-man in the 1930's. Born in Rumford, Maine, Churchill moved west as a child, and was playing piano professionally by age 15 with an orchestra in Ventura, California. Primarily a self-taught, instinctive musician, Churchill studied at the University of California in Los Angeles, though he managed to obtain only two semesters of music theory and composition before dropping out of college to play with a road band. In an interview in the magazine *Author and Composer,* Churchill recalled:

"I went to the University of California at Los Angeles, but sort of took time out on my music, picking it up again when I

Courtesy of Bernard Brown

Frank Churchill performed mood music on the sets of silent features in the 1920's, and appeared in at least one, Beau Brummel *(1924), with John Barrymore and Mary Astor. He is at the keyboard in this still from that film, flanked by Paul Wismer (left) and Bernard Brown, who later played an important role as the musical director of the fledgling Leon Schlesinger studio.*

went to Tijuana and played for honky-tonks, a very colorful experience for a kid out to see the world. This was in 1922, when I was 19 and had some pretty exciting times. There were many brawls and gunfights, augmented on one occasion by the sudden intrusion of a party of U. S. Marines on pleasure bent. Several times I found that dodging bullets would at least keep a person active, if nothing else. From Tijuana I went to Juarez."

While playing in Tucson, the orchestra with which he was working disbanded, and Churchill returned to Hollywood and silent pictures, supplying "mood music" on piano and a portable organ for actors on the sets. With the advent of the talkies, he expanded into recording and radio work, serving at radio station KNX in Hollywood for five years as piano accompanist and soloist, and recording for RKO-Radio Pictures before switching to Disney's. Though originally hired by Disney solely as a pianist, Churchill was soon composing for the studio. Scoring both Mickeys and Sillys from 1931 on (and in the process creating a mammoth hit for the studio with his work on *Three Little Pigs*), he lent music to nearly 50 shorts before being assigned the task of composing the songs for Disney's first feature, *Snow White,* in 1937. The tremendous success of this film led to his work on *The Reluctant Dragon* (in which he could be seen in the studio tour sequence), *Dumbo* (1941), and *Bambi* (1942). However, even before the latter's release Churchill's career and life came to an untimely end. Troubled by nervous problems and drinking, Frank Churchill killed himself on May 14, 1942, with a shotgun on his ranch near Newhall, California, at the age of 40. His obituary in the New York *Herald Tribune* noted that he was ranked among the highest paid members of ASCAP. The music for *Dumbo* had just won an Oscar for "Best Score" and the song, "Baby Mine" by Churchill and Ned Washington, had been nominated for "Best Song." Churchill's work for *Bambi* would receive similar dual nominations in 1942.

Churchill's work for Disney bridges the studio's transition from the primitive Mickey shorts to the refinement of *Dumbo* and *Bambi*. His first assignments at the studio were a Mickey Mouse/Robinson Crusoe-type story called *The Castaway* and *The China Plate,* a Silly Symphony, both in 1931. Churchill scored mainly Sillys during his first year, finishing *The Fox Hunt* for November release and *The Bird Store* for January of 1932. Though the Mickeys were fairly well established by this time, the Sillys were still in their formative stage and Churchill's scores for them — melodic and appealing, but otherwise not especially distinctive — reflect this. *The Fox Hunt* music might have come off any programmatic novelty record of the period. It is written for small orchestra, with no dialogue but plenty of sound effects and a chorus (of hunters) that sings nonsense syllables from time to time. A French horn-call figure lends some unity to the piece, which concludes with a *Light Cavalry Overture*-type gallop.

For *The Bird Store* Churchill devised a backdrop much like the film itself in form: half musical/sight gags and half relatively straight background score to emphasize the conflict that ensues when a hungry cat wanders into the store for a free dinner in the short's loosely plotted second half. Buoyant melodies, concentrated and lacking in development as they are, lend continuity to the short's first half, which is merely a collection of bird caricatures and gags set to appropriate themes: a melodic waltz establishes the setting, soon giving way to a 4/4 section with synchronized auto-horn bird sounds (an aural gag which was again used as late as 1950 to acoustically personify Tweedle Dum and Dee in *Alice in Wonderland*), another section evokes a whooping bird (and concludes with a rousing "Whoopee!"), and a clever passage built on a simple scale (with a concluding sour note as a young bird learns to sing) aptly demonstrates the composer's talent for getting distinctive results with the most rudimentary of musical means.

During 1932 and 1933 Churchill divided his time between scoring Sillys and Mickeys. This period found the studio moving away from the simple illustration of musical gags which had characterized many of its early films, and working towards a tighter synthesizing of plot, characterizations, and musical score. The earlier tendency culminated with *The Whoopee Party* in September 1932, a relatively plotless Mouse cartoon wherein Mickey and the gang stage the ultimate party to Churchill's irresistibly infectious score. Between bites from sandwiches, Mickey and his friends cavort to a wild jazz backup which mounts to such a hot climax that by the time the police arrive to raid the party (and stay to join the music-mania!) every object in the house and finally the house itself has become animate, swinging and gyrating to the beat of the music. *Whoopee Party* is perhaps the ultimate expression of this gestation period in Disney's work, enthusiastically embodying the studio's enthrallment with the synchronization of music and uncomplicated story visuals, even while pointing the way toward future short works. Though these would eventually prove to be light-years removed from their predecessor in technical prowess, rarely did they duplicate their forerun-

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Frank Churchill

ner's sheer good humor and ingratiatingly crude energy. *The Whoopee Party* stands as a primitive classic, musically and graphically.

Churchill soon thereafter played a major part in the creation of another studio milestone, *Three Little Pigs*, released in May 1933. *Pigs* contained the first hit tune derived from a short film, and it was the first animated cartoon in which music and song attained such a high level of sustained, integrated development. The plot unfolds purely through music, singing and rhythmically timed and spoken dialogue. It is a glorification of the Puritan work ethic, effected though the unlikely medium of a one-act cartoon operetta (the form used for many of the Sillys at this time, and a definite precursor of Churchill's *Snow White* score). While the source material has really nothing to do with music, its transposition posits each pig as an instrumentalist — flautist, fiddler, pianist — who delineates his own personality and presents the film's "philosophy" ("work and play don't mix") via song.

Interestingly, the song "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?" (which attained tremendous popularity in the wake of the cartoon's release) is never rendered intact during the entire film, being fragmented, forestalled or interrupted by the narrative (and thus giving the action roughly the ABACADA structure of a musical rondo). The careful adherence of Churchill's scoring to the strict timing worked out beforehand by director Burt Gillett aided immeasurably in achieving a synthesis of plot, dialogue and music that might justifiably be termed Wagnerian were not the adjective so vaunting in such a context. To present this little moral fable in the most direct and appealing of manners, song, rhymed speech and traditional background scoring were seamlessly wedded to musical gags, e.g., when the wolf, to foil the two gullible pigs, pretends to give up the pursuit of them (to the accompaniment of a charmingly bland "wolf-trot"), or when the Practical Pig executes an imposing piano cadenza a la Rachmaninoff as the wolf literally blows himself blue in the face while vainly attempting to blow down the door of the brick house. The film's instant success, with an attendant public outcry of "Give us more pigs!", resulted in what might be dubbed Disney's "Pig Quartet," with three installments scored by Churchill: *Three Little Pigs, The Big Bad Wolf* (1934, with an especially silly scenario that introduced a Betty Boop-voiced Little Red Riding Hood and reprised the "Who's Afraid" hit), and *The Three Little Wolves* (1936), in which the Big Bad Wolf went paternal. As late as 1939, the characters turned up again in one of the last of the Sillys, *The Practical Pig*.

Churchill scored nearly 30 more cartoons between the release of *Pigs* in '33 and 1937, when feature scoring was to occupy his talents. His scores during this period include *Mickey's Gala Premiere* in 1933, a melodic but not specifically music-oriented compendium of movie-star caricatures that did, however, feature some catchy and very '30-ish period music; *Old King Cole*, a '33 collaboration with Bert Lewis comprised of musical turns for a bevy of swinging nursery rhyme characters; and *Camping Out*, a 1934 Churchill/Lewis collaboration featuring a marvelous musical opening for Mickey on harmonica with the rest of the gang on backup (and the melody of which is at one point cleverly stated in counterpoint with the musical buzzing of the troublesome mosquito who instigates an intricate slapstick assault). Though this short's infectiously catchy opening is effective, it is also most compact, quickly giving way to a more subordinate kind of background scoring, and in it one can hear the composer "chomping at the bit" as it were, to really cut loose into a more extended musical production number, an impulse here thwarted by the concentrated demands of getting on with the action. Had the plot allowed for it, this brief musical theme could easily have been developed into as extended and intricate a musical number as Churchill's ensuing "A Silly Song" ("The Dwarfs' Yodel Song") in *Snow White*.

In 1932, Disney's musical staff took on the only musician to rival Frank Churchill during this period, Leigh Harline (pronounced Lee Har-LEEN). Harline was born in Salt Lake City on March 26, 1907. More thoroughly trained than Churchill, Harline brought to the studio his background as a graduate of the University of Utah, where he had majored in music and studied piano and organ with J. Spencer Cornwall, director for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Harline moved to California in 1928 and achieved a thorough musical grounding in radio, working for various stations in both Los Angeles and San Francisco as composer, conductor, arranger, instrumentalist, singer and announcer; it was his radio work that attracted the attention of Walt Disney. (In 1931, Harline provided the music for the first transcontinental radio broadcast to emanate from the West Coast.)

Like Churchill, Harline worked on both the Mickey Mouse shorts and the Silly Symphonies, but Disney soon recognized Harline's greater musical sophistication and promptly assigned him to several of the more musically ambitious Silly Symphonies. One of the first shorts Harline scored for the studio was the 1933 Silly, *The Pied Piper*, a retelling of the myth presented entirely through semi-operatic, recitative-like dialogue, voice-over choral narrative, and extended sequences of terse imag-

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One of Churchill's earliest assignments as a Disney composer was the music for the fabulously successful Three Little Pigs *(1933).*

ery set to an elaborate background score for soloists, chorus and orchestra — in effect, a cartoon cantata. 1933 and '34 also saw Harline composing such extremely musical Sillys as *The Night Before Christmas, The Grasshopper and the Ants* (which produced the modestly popular tune, "The World Owes Me A Living"), and the once again pseudo-operatic *The Goddess of Spring,* whose experimentation with idealized human figures much given to straightforward singing served as a kind of dry-run for *Snow White.*

Harline collaborated with Churchill on several projects in the course of the 1930's, and two of these, *Lullaby Land* (1933) and *Funny Little Bunnies* (1934), offer a rich profusion of melodies. Churchill was generally assigned the opening title, often assisted by Larry Morey (who penned the lyrics for the team's later feature songs), while Harline concentrated on the ensuing musical episodes. For *Lullaby Land* Churchill contributed a brief, excessively sentimental title tune in three-quarter time, sung by a trio of saccharine female voices, but Harline's crisp and pungent follow-up quickly takes over as the baby-hero and a charming stuffed calico dog slip off to dreamland for a cautionary lesson in what ". . . baby mustn't touch" and the havoc that occurs when baby nonetheless *does.* The methods for presenting cartoon narrative through music varied extensively from film to film (even at this early date in the studio's evolution); in this instance the cartoon's gentle warnings were delivered by a voice-over chorus, with the chief characters remaining mute. Harline employs *his* briskly-animated voices, scherzo-like, to enumerate the dangers in baby's small world, and a wonderful minor mode number to characterize the bogey-men who alarmingly materialize from the ominous smoke of some matches with which baby, unheeding, mischievously plays. The dream interlude concludes with an appearance by the singing sandman and baby's safe return to his cradle, all set to Brahms' familiar lullaby.

For *Funny Little Bunnies,* a film that curiously takes on the air of an industrial documentary as it meticulously explores Easter-egg production by a troupe of musical Easter bunnies, Churchill again contributed a melodic title tune (whose theme is used throughout the narrative) and Harline supplied the remainder (including an amusing vocal number for a group of singing hens, a la Clara Cluck). Though graphically the animal figures seem to waver in a stylistic limbo somewhere between the earthy primitivism of the earlier cartoons and the genteel refinement of the later ones, and though the underlying intention seems mainly the displaying of the newly perfected Technicolor process, the music for *Bunnies* is a cornucopia of delightful melodies that pour from the soundtrack as vividly as the colors leap from the celluloid, boasting a greater number of memorable tunes than one is likely to find in a season of latter-day Broadway musicals.

Wilfred Jackson recalls that a well-known Silly, *The Tortoise and the Hare* (1935), was also probably a kind of collaboration between Churchill and Harline, with Harline scoring the picture by developing the melody of the song, "Slow But Sure," by Churchill and Larry Morey, much in the manner in which he adapted the music of Rossini for *The Band Concert.* The song itself, however, is not heard in the film, which instead features a melodious and cohesive, if subordinate, instrumental score and a good deal of character dialogue.

Though Churchill and Harline both were consummate melodists, the pronounced dissimilarity in their respective styles resulted from the dissimilarities in their personal and musical backgrounds. Jackson, who as a Disney director worked extremely closely with both composers in creating many of the greatest Sillys and feature sequences, afforded the author several first-hand observations on each man's modus operandi:

"Frank Churchill was primarily an accomplished pianist. To have Frank play anything at all on the piano, in person, was a delightful thing. He seemed to have an endless variety of numbers, both classical and popular, in his repertoire, and when he really got wound up and going good, seemed able to come up with an equally endless number of his own tunes.

"Frank's music was melodic (maybe that isn't the right word but the melody was the thing: his music was uncomplicated and you could whistle or hum it easily), but there was one thing about Frank's cartoon scores that was sometimes a little disappointing to me. After having heard Frank play one on the piano, right in the same little room where I was, there were times when the arranger who orchestrated it or the orchestra who performed it somehow lost something, and the score in its final form was somewhat of a let-down for me. But others, who had not heard Frank play it on the piano, never seemed to find anything lacking.

"There was another thing about working with Frank on a cartoon score. When the two of us first began to plan out the way the action was going to relate to the musical score, and we were searching for the right tune to use for a particular part of the picture, Frank would often come up with something perfectly satisfactory almost at once. Just as I was visualizing action that would go pretty well with what had been chosen, he

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Leigh Harline.

would come up with something else he liked a little better, and so we would start working with that one. Frank could give a director so many satisfactory tunes to choose from, and could make each one of them sound so good as he romped through it on the piano, that it was often quite difficult to decide which one *not* to use with the action.

"Working with Leigh Harline was a very different thing. I believe Leigh had a much broader musical education than Frank, and his music seemed quite different. Also, Leigh was not as accomplished at playing the piano — he couldn't 'sell' a cartoon score by performing it, as Frank could. Leigh's music was melodic enough but it depended much more on musical elements other than melody for its effectiveness: his counter-melodies, harmonic structure, things like that which I do not understand about music, all contributed so much more to the final effectiveness of his scores that, even had Leigh been equally good as a piano-player, he could not have conveyed the full feeling of his scores with just two hands and a piano." (For verification of Jackson's comment, one need only listen to Harline's complex score for *Music Land,* a brilliant short that is discussed in depth below, and whose brilliantly contrapuntal synthesis of jazz and classical styles is intrinsically orchestral in conception.)

"In the early and mid-'30's, the musician usually did not begin his work on a Disney cartoon until the director began to time the action. This was after the story work had all been okayed and the picture was moved from the story (or gag-man's) room into the director's music room. And so I worked right along with Frank or with Leigh, from the very beginning of the scoring for each picture. And, of course, for those early Disney shorts the musical score was composed to accompany the complete action throughout the entire picture before any of the actual action had been drawn by the animators. The picture itself existed only in the minds of the director and musician (and in the story sketches, which looked like a comic strip of the action), as both men timed the action and wrote the score.

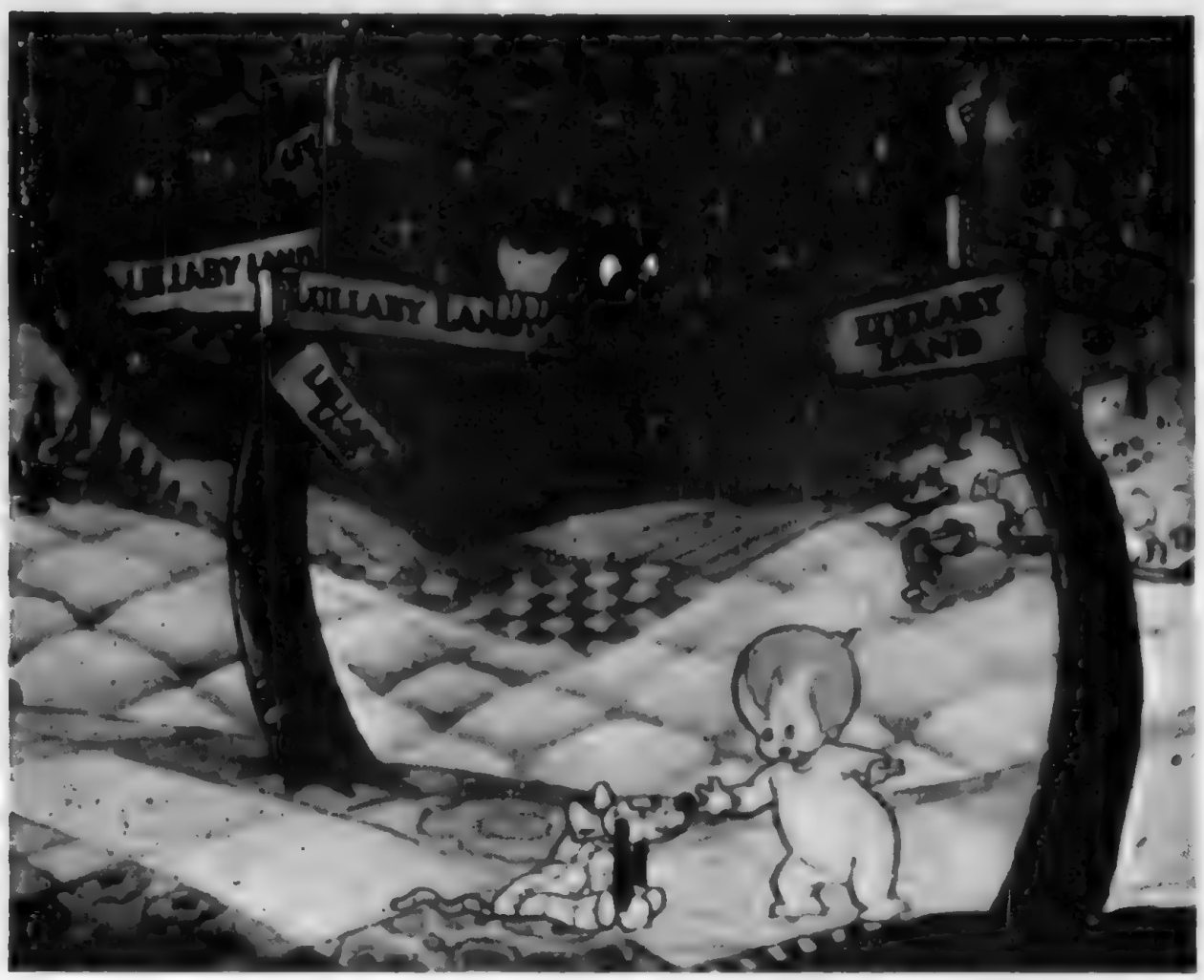
"When Frank Churchill began to score a cartoon with me, he started right out playing pieces on the piano, suggesting one tune after another for whatever action we were starting to time. Usually, it didn't seem to make much difference to Frank which one of them I would pick to use, and if the one we chose didn't seem to be working out well, he was quick to suggest some different piece of music to try.

"Leigh Harline didn't go at it that way. Leigh would more often just sit and think about it while he and I talked over the action for a fairly good-sized section of the cartoon. From time to time he would swivel around in his chair to face the piano and play an accompaniment while humming a little fragment of melody to himself, but the tune would not usually get very far before he stopped and turned around to talk some more. Finally, after sketching out with a pencil several of these fragments of tunes on a music staff, Leigh would go right through the entire section on the piano, though not really playing it non-stop the way Frank would have done. Leigh 'talked' his music as much as he 'played' it — that is, he would stop to explain that '. . . in this part violins will carry the melody with a deep countermelody on trombone, like this . . . ,' and he would play the trombone part while humming or singing out the violin part, then continue with: '. . . then when we come to this theme' and he would play it, '. . . it will be carried by muted trumpet' and so on, right through the entire section we were discussing.

"If I thought some part wasn't appropriate for the action, Leigh was quite flexible about re-working it, but he wasn't at all inclined to just discard some part of it completely and simply substitute a different piece of music, as Frank would have done. Leigh more often found an alternative way to construct and perform the questionable material, working this way and that to give it a different feeling, trying to satisfy my requirements for the action. He would keep at it this way for a long time before deciding to actually discard the music in question and substitute something new.

"After timing the complete picture, we then had to present our results to Walt for his okay, and Leigh would play his score straight through for Walt on the piano, just as Frank did. But when Leigh performed in this way, you didn't get the same feeling from it as when Frank played one of his pieces on the piano: you mostly just had to believe that Leigh knew what he was doing and that it would all turn out right in the end, and, as time went on, we found out that it always did. When you heard the final orchestra track on one of Leigh's scores, there was never ever a feeling of any let-down from the impression I had when he first performed the music on the piano (as happened now and then with Frank's music).

"I suppose that, to a musician, Leigh's cartoon scores might seem a notch above Frank's in some respects. To me, they seemed like symphonic writing by a good classical composer, while Frank's seemed more like fine performances of catchy popular music. Both men seemed able to accompany the action in their assigned pictures to my complete satisfaction. However, I believe that



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Harline and Churchill collaborated on the score for Lullaby Land, *a charming 1933 Silly Symphony.*

Leigh wrote his music a little 'over the heads' of our typical theater audience of the early and mid-'30's, while Frank's music hit the mark: that is, it appealed more to the tastes of the audience we were aiming for, and in that respect, I think Frank's cartoon scores were perhaps a bit more successful in accomplishing what Walt wanted to achieve at that time. For myself, I found it equally delightful to work with either one of them, each in his own different way, on those early sound cartoons."

It was probably Harline's sophisticated musical technique, as well as his versatility and command of a wide variety of musical styles and idioms that made him highly desirable as composer for some of the highlights in the Silly series, which came to a creative peak between 1935 and the year of its demise, 1939. (Feature animation, for which the Sillys had paved the way, absorbed the techniques and lavish design as well as the emphasis on an elaborate musicality that had been characteristic of the Sillys at their best.) Churchill, too, continued to score the Sillys, including *The Golden Touch, The Robber Kitten,* and *Who Killed Cock Robin?,* during the peak period; however, Churchill no longer composed for shorts between '37 and '39 because of his work for the upcoming features, and his music would be heard in only four of the 1940's shorts: *Bone Trouble* (1940), *Orphans' Benefit* (1941), *The Army Mascot* and *Sky Trooper* (1942). Harline contributed to no shorts during 1939, while working on *Pinocchio,* but later scored 14 Mickey, Donald, and Pluto shorts between 1940 and 1942, thereafter leaving Disney to free-lance at various Hollywood studios, including RKO, 20th and MGM.

After allowing for the singular musical capabilities of both men, if one were forced to single out the "ultimate" Silly Symphonies composer, the title would have to be Leigh Harline's. The scores he produced between 1935 and 1938 are as classic as the films of which they are an essential part, and, taken out of context, simply rank with some of the finest, most inventive music ever created in Hollywood: *Music Land, The Band Concert, The Cookie Carnival, Elmer Elephant, Water Babies, The Country Cousin, Woodland Cafe,* and most memorably, *The Old Mill.*

1935 saw the release of two authentic masterpieces: *The Band Concert,* the first color Mickey, on February 23, and *Music Land* on October 5. *The Band Concert* neatly illustrates that although there were two distinct series of shorts produced at the Disney studio (the Mickey Mouse "character" cartoons, wherein music was customarily subordinate to plot, gags and "star" turns, and the Silly Symphonies, in which a fluid, cohesive musical score was of prime consideration), production techniques often overlapped. Many of the early Mickey Mouse films relied heavily on music as the conceptual premise for the gags and "business": e.g., *Steamboat Willie, Just Mickey* (in 1930, copyrighted as *Fiddlin' Around,* an extended personality/characterization study of the Mouse as *artiste,* and concerned with nothing more than Mickey's execution of an extended violin solo), *Blue Rhythm* (1931), *The Whoopee Party,* and finally *The Band Concert.* Relatively plotless, the latter is an elaborate put-on of the classical concert, here placed in the rural setting that served as the locale of many of the early shorts, with Mickey as a sensitive but iron-willed conductor presiding over a motley crew of rustic instrumentalists in a performance of Rossini's "William Tell Overture." The enthusiastically earnest performance is rudely interrupted by the mid-'30's Donald Duck at his most rubbery and long-billed, giving what is possibly his most hilarious portrayal during this period, as a prankish hayseed who continually breaks into Rossini with his own fifed rendition of "Turkey in the Straw." To further complicate the occasion and provide a breathtaking finale, a cyclone descends on the bandstand during the overture's final movement, to sweep the unflappable conductor and his equally oblivious consort into its whirling vortex before rudely depositing them (though without a beat missed) among the branches of a huge tree festooned with the twister's debris: a bathtub, a portable toilet, a barrel, etc.

Wilfred Jackson recalls that it was Harline who adapted Rossini to meet the film's timing and gag demands:

"Leigh *composed* the score for *The Band Concert* though I don't think he would have agreed with my putting it that way. As I remember it, our musicians spent more time and effort on patiently working and reworking their music to fit perfectly with what us crazy, dumb artists drew and dreamed up for the action, than they did writing whatever original music we needed for the cartoons. I do not recall *specific* instances of reshaping *The Band Concert's* original music, but I would be very surprised if on close examination you did not find Rossini's original score bent a bit out of shape here and there. Our studio musicians were amazingly ingenious at altering the natural structure of their music to accommodate the requirements of the animation, without allowing the end result to sound as if the music had been overly tampered with. Leigh Harline worked with me in our usual, painstaking way on the music for

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Funny Little Bunnies, a 1934 Silly Symphony, was another collaboration between Harline and Churchill.

Band Concert, and I would say Leigh *composed* that score.

"I do not recall who actually came up with the idea for the picture. By the mid-'30's we had a good story department at Disney's, and quite often a story line would be pretty well developed and most of the cartoon business pictured on the storyboards before a director was assigned to a picture. If I had to make a guess as to where the idea came from, I would say that Pinto Colvig would be a likely one to have thought of it. Pinto was one of our most creative story/idea men in the mid-'30's. He was not an artist, but a musician who had played the clarinet in the band of a traveling circus before coming to Disney's. The idea for that picture would be a natural one for Pinto to have had: he knew band music, he knew all about performing in a band under all kinds of circumstances, and had been in many small towns in the early years of this century. Pinto definitely worked on the story for *Band Concert,* whether or not he thought of the idea, and many of the gags and bits of cartoon business in the picture were his. After Walt okayed the story and I began timing and shaping it up so that the animators could begin their work, Pinto continued to work with us and later with the musicians too, helping us all to understand how the musicians in *The Band Concert* would do the actions we had decided for them."

With gags both broad and subtle, witty characterizations developed from a sharp observance of instrumentalists in the heat of performance, and a virtuoso finale, *Band Concert* is an early classic which, like the "Dance of the Hours" sequence in *Fantasia,* can still "bring down the house" with the most blase of audiences. Harline's brillant adaptation with its profusion of aural gags — a clarinet's high-pitched instrument suddenly transposed into a hollow-sounding bass by the sudden impact of a slapstick mallet, among many other examples — is intrinsic to the general excellence of a film reputed to have been one of Toscanini's favorites.

Possibly the most absolutely musical of all the Sillys, *Music Land* springs in all respects (plot, character and background design, even "voices") from an immediately decipherable semiotics of music. As still another variation on *Romeo and Juliet*'s venerable premise, the cartoon's "plot" cleverly satirizes the "symphonic jazz" idiom that emerged within the American and European concert world of the 1920's. A violin-Princess from the Land of Symphony falls in love with a plump saxophone-Prince from the Isle of Jazz. Considered by the cello-Queen of the symphonic domain to be an ill wind blowing no one any good, the Pop Prince nevertheless crosses the Sea of Discord that separates the two island kingdoms to court his Princess, only to be captured and thrown into a metronome prison for his trouble (this latter a visual/musical gag with a profusion of musical and aesthetic ramifications, particularly to the Disney composers, who were literally dominated by the metronomic precision with which these '30's shorts were timed). The Prince's incarceration sets off a furious battle in the course of which Prince saves Princess from drowning and a Happy Ending is had by all as Prince and Princess, King and Queen, are joined in marriage (the vows no doubt presided over by George Gershwin).

For *Music Land* Leigh Harline concocted scoring as inventive as anything in Gershwin (perhaps even more complex and sophisticated) and thereby proved himself to be thoroughly versed in the techniques and idioms of contemporary concert music. For the short's finale alone, Harline stirs up a brief but furious instrumental toccata which pits the romance's warring factions against each other in a polyrhythmic clash, the jazz ensemble playing in 2/4 cut-time against the symphonic isle's blasts of Wagner ("Ride of the Valkyries") in 3/2 (9/8) meter bellowing forth from a reverberant pipe organ! The score is punctuated throughout with a variety of classical "quotes" (proving that the use of musical pastiche is not peculiar to such contemporary avant-garde composers as Luciano Berio and George Rochberg): a strings and harp arrangement of Beethoven's "Minuet in G," for example. (Harline even includes an in-joke of his own: upon discovering the violin-Princess hidden behind a tree, the saxophone briefly spouts the "Peek-a-boo, I see you" theme from *Lullaby Land*). While adhering generally to the classical/pop dichotomy that *Music Land* gently satirizes, the composer nonetheless romps through a wide assortment of musical styles. However, for the climactic scenes in which the Princess, nearly drowning in the Sea of Discord, frantically waves a white flag to halt the battle raging around her, Harline reverts to straightforward background scoring; the dramatic earnestness of the music representing the character's plight then concludes with a brief but meltingly beautiful and characteristically Harline-esque modulation that serves as transition into the wedding finale, for which Wagner's *Wedding March* receives a hybrid treatment of both classical and pop.

The score's orchestration is equally brilliant and, indeed, it is nearly impossible to imagine this most idiomatically orchestral of music transposed into any other form, or to break apart orchestration from conception. Generally strings

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Penguins were brought into the Disney studio during work on Peculiar Penguins *(1934). Harline, who composed the music for that cartoon, is at the piano. Wilfred Jackson, the film's director, is at the left, with Ted Sears and Walt Disney.*

and harp are used to characterize Symphony Land, while brass, saxes, reeds, and wild drum riffs back up the Isle of Jazz sequences. The effective explorations of instrumental color — muted brass, alto flutes, squealing piccolos in the battle scenes — also underscore the mood of aural fantasy.

From the orchestra, too, come *Music Land*'s characters, who "speak" only with the voices of their respective instrumental timbres. What today seems an innovation in character construction and development was, in reality, a venerable gag culled form the American popular theater and infused with the Disney studio gang's goofing around, as Wilfred Jackson recalls:

"Back in the days when I was young, the imitation of spoken words with musical instruments was not too uncommon a vaudeville trick. And too, when the musicians at Disney's got together to warm up and tune their instruments for one of our recording sessions, they would sometimes clown around 'talking' to one another with musical sounds: a tuba player might make sudden, fierce, growling sounds at a violinist who would squeal back with 'frightened' squeaks from his fiddle. So this idea was not necessarily a *new* thing when we made *Music Land,* and again the notion to use it may well have been Pinto Colvig's.

"When we began the production work we auditioned several musicians who had some ability (and inclination) to mimic words with appropriate musical sounds, just as we would have auditioned actors for a speaking part to find the one best able to fulfill our needs. The story, as it came to my music room from the story department, had the actual words indicated in only the most general way, so we had the auditioning musicians try to 'say' everything we could think of that might express the same meaning as that indicated on the story board, and to see how it could best be done on saxophone, or violin or whatever. The words which they were able to imitate successfully were very, very limited, and so we wrote the actual dialogue for the picture *after* we found out what they could really do.

"Once the soundtrack had been 'read,' the reading was placed on the exposure sheet for the animator in the same way that words of spoken dialogue would have been shown, and we made every effort to render each situation, and all the pantomime of the cartoon characters, so obvious that the viewer would imagine he *heard* the word we had in mind, no matter what the actual sound. I believe that if you run the picture and close your eyes, you won't understand half of what the cartoon musical instruments 'say.' But if you *watch* and listen, it all seems to come across pretty well."

Needless to say, this particular method of giving voice to the characters afforded many memorable moments, especially in the exchange between Prince and Princess at their first meeting, with the coy violin's glissandi, scooped notes, and florid runs met by the supplicating saxphone passages to effect a recognizably amorous, would-be seduction, nicely complemented by the puckish background accompaniment. One particularly clever music/sight gag occurs when the sax writes a letter for help from his tick-tock prison: as he notates the missive on a sheet of musical manuscript paper, each word-note is paralleled by the studio musician; he artfully "flubs" the final note of the musical 'phrase' to represent aurally the Prince's making a visible writing mistake, which is quickly erased and corrected so that the musician may repeat it correctly.

1937 saw Harline producing the music for two masterful Silly Symphonies, *Woodland Cafe* and *The Old Mill,* as well as collaborating with Oliver Wallace on *Mickey's Amateurs* and with Paul Smith on *Hawaiian Holiday. Woodland Cafe,* an elaborate parody of the typical 1930's nightclub musical, features a lively, flawlessly arranged three-movement score combining original music with pop arrangements. A brief credit and introductory passage (suggestive of Harline's toy-like music for the opening sequences of *Pinocchio*), and a wild dance number apparently inspired by "12th Street Rag" make up the first section, followed by an electric Apache dance for tough spider and seductive fly, and a swinging version of the pop standard, "Everybody's Truckin'," performed by the cafe's bug-band and a black chorus that pre-dates *Dumbo*'s "When I See An Elephant Fly."

The Old Mill is an undisputed masterpiece whose delights and accomplishments cannot really be condensed into a few sentences. The most symphonic in form of the Sillys (and thus the most anticipatory of *Fantasia*), Harline's harmonically and contrapuntally rich score is an uninterrupted tone poem for symphonic chamber orchestra and wordless chorus, the broad outlines of the score (and film) loosely comparable to the tempo structure of a standard symphony or romantic overture a la Rossini's "William Tell." A moderately tempoed introduction and exposition presents the film's main melodic material, a lush theme clothed in the rich parallel harmonies of Debussy, Delius and the other musical impressionists, accompanying the camera's gently restless truck from a long shot of the mill

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Woodland Cafe (1937) has one of Harline's most exuberant scores.

into its dusky heart, through the inner body of the structure and out the upper window to return again to the millpond outside. (This opening sequence is surely one of the most elaborate and fluid continuous shots in pre-feature Disney, and also introduced the studio's well-known multiplane camera.) A jaunty scherzo for frogs and orchestra provides the film's second movement, followed by a brillantly constructed storm finale and a final recapitulation of the opening music as the camera returns to its original vantage point across the millpond to reveal the mill askance but still standing in the light of a golden dawn. Completely eschewing dialogue of any sort, the film's reliance on orchestral timbre, combined with an impressionistic visual pantheism, boldly looks forward to the style adapted by Disney for his third feature, *Fantasia*, the notable difference being that *The Old Mill's* musical score evolved out of the original concept for the film itself, rather than vice versa as was the case with *Fantasia*.

Writers on Disney have often accurately pointed out that without the Mickeys and the Silly Symphonies, there would probably have been no Disney feature-length animation. It's also a safe bet that had Churchill and Harline not been around to score these shorts, the subsequent music for what are Disney's greatest features would not have been among the most memorable ever devised in Hollywood. That is another chapter in the history of animation's Golden Age.

An article by Ross Care on the music for the Disney features will appear in a future issue of Funnyworld.

Churchill and Harline Filmographies

These credits, compiled by the Walt Disney Archives, are for Disney short subjects only.

Frank Churchill

1931: *The Castaway, The China Plate, The Busy Beavers, The Cat's Out, Egyptian Melodies, The Clock Store, The Fox Hunt.*

1932: *The Bird Store, The Grocery Boy, Barnyard Olympics, Musical Farmer, The Bears and the Bees, Mickey in Arabia, The Whoopee Party, Bugs in Love, Touchdown Mickey, The Klondike Kid, Santa's Workshop.*

1933: *Building a Building, Mickey's Pal Pluto, Birds in the Spring* (with Bert Lewis), *Mickey's Mellerdrammer, Ye Olden Days, Three Little Pigs, Mickey's Gala Premiere, Old King Cole* (with Lewis), *Lullaby Land* (with Leigh Harline) *Puppy Love, The Steeple Chase, Giantland.*

1934: *Shanghaied, Camping Out* (with Lewis), *Playful Pluto, Funny Little Bunnies* (with Harline), *The Big Bad Wolf, Gulliver Mickey, The Flying Mouse* (with Lewis), *The Orphans' Benefit, Mickey Plays Papa* (with Lewis), *The Dognapper* (with Lewis).

1935: *The Tortoise and the Hare, Mickey's Man Friday* (with Lewis), *The Golden Touch, The Robber Kitten, Who Killed Cock Robin?, On Ice* (with Harline and Lewis), *Pluto's Judgment Day* (with Harline), *Three Orphan Kittens, Cock o' the Walk* (with Albert Hay Malotte).

1936: *Mickey's Polo Team* (with Paul J. Smith), *Three Little Wolves, Thru the Mirror* (with Smith), *Toby Tortoise Returns* (with Harline), *More Kittens.*

1940: *Bone Trouble* (with Smith).

1941: *Orphans' Benefit.*

1942: *The Army Mascot, Sky Trooper.*

Leigh Harline

1933: *Father Noah's Ark, Mickey's Mechanical Man, Lullaby Land* (with Frank Churchill), *The Pied Piper, The Pet Store, The Night Before Christmas.*

1934: *The China Shop, The Grasshopper and the Ants, Funny Little Bunnies* (with Churchill), *The Wise Little Hen, Peculiar Penguins, The Goddess of Spring, Two Gun Mickey.*

1935: *The Tortoise and the Hare* (with Churchill), *The Band Concert, Mickey's Service Station, Water Babies, The Cookie Carnival, Mickey's Garden, Pluto's Judgment Day* (with Churchill), *On Ice* (with Bert Lewis and Churchill), *Music Land.*

1936: *Mickey's Grand Opera, Elmer Elephant, Moving Day* (with Albert Hay Malotte), *Mickey's Rival, Toby Tortoise Returns* (with Churchill), *The Country Cousin, Mother Pluto.*

1937: *Woodland Cafe, Mickey's Amateurs* (with Oliver Wallace), *The Old Mill, Hawaiian Holiday* (with Paul J. Smith).

1938: *Wynken, Blynken and Nod, Mickey's Trailer* (with Wallace), *Farmyard Symphony.*

1940: *Pluto's Dream House, Mr. Mouse Takes a Trip* (with Wallace), *Pantry Pirate.*

1941: *Golden Eggs, Baggage Buster, A Good Time for a Dime, Truant Officer Donald* (with Smith), *Lend a Paw, Donald's Camera, Old Macdonald Duck, The Art of Self Defense.*

1942: *Pluto Junior, The Sleep Walker, The Vanishing Private* (with Wallace).

The Changing of the Guard

Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston retired in January, after more than four decades at Walt Disney Productions. They were the last of the "nine old men" — Disney's top animators in the '40's and '50's — to have been active as animators. Wolfgang Reitherman, another of the nine, is still on the Disney staff as a producer-director, but he no longer animates.

The Rescuers, *released last summer, was the last Disney feature to be dominated by the animation of any of the "nine old men." Three of its directing animators — Thomas, Johnston and Milt Kahl, who left the Disney studio in 1976 — were among the "nine old men." (The fourth directing animator was Don Bluth, who is the acknowledged leader of the younger Disney animators.) Thomas and Johnston did some preliminary work on* The Fox and the Hound, *the next Disney feature cartoon, but very little of what eventually appears on the screen (in 1980) will have come from their hands.*

A few months after The Rescuers *was released, Disney released* Pete's Dragon, *a combination live-action-animation feature that was heralded as the first Disney feature whose animation was mainly the work of the young animators who have joined the Disney staff during the last few years. In this review, Mark Kausler — himself a Hollywood animator — assesses the "last hurrah" of the Disney veterans and the "first hurrah" of the new team.*

By MARK KAUSLER

Of all the animated features released in 1977 — *Allegro Non Troppo, Dirty Duck, Raggedy Ann and Andy, The Mouse and His Child, Wizards, The Rescuers,* and others — only *The Rescuers* was an unequivocal hit, thanks largely to excellent promotion by the Disney organization and some of the best reviews for a Disney feature cartoon since *Jungle Book* was released more than 10 years ago. Despite its success, *The Rescuers* suffered from many of the flaws — especially neglect of the story structure — that sank most of the other 1977 cartoon features.

The strongest character in *The Rescuers* is Madame Medusa, a deliciously mad villainess with a lust for a diamond called the Devil's Eye. Just why she wants this particular jewel is never explained, outside of a vague reference to "power for its owner." We shall never know what great opportunities for fantasy were missed by not revealing the powers of the Devil's Eye. Medusa's motivations are dismissed by Miss Bianca the mouse as "utterly mad," nothing more, which tends to work against any depth Medusa's character might otherwise have had. Milt Kahl, Medusa's designer and animator, did the most outstanding animation in the picture, although many of Medusa's scenes are a bit too comical for a real feeling of menace to develop. A little less Madam Mim and a little more Cruella de Vil or Maleficent would have been in order.

Medusa was also the personal property of Kahl in the sense that no one else who handled her in the film drew her just right. The peculiar shape of her huge upper arms and bony forearms, and of her bottom (by turns bulky and squared-off) made her a difficult character for anyone else but her originator to draw. This is especially evident in the water-skiing chase finale in which Medusa is undone. The drawing is off; Medusa looks merely ugly, instead of crazy or funny. This sequence was handled primarily by Cliff Nordberg, who did as much as could have been expected with the third-rate story material. The upsetting of Medusa's dignity by the swamp folks in this sequence is just not funny enough; the alcoholic swamp critters are so numerous and poorly focused that the audience has more sympathy for Medusa than for the "heroes." Medusa should have met her match in a more imaginative manner.

Madame Medusa presses against the boundaries of individual expression for an animator at Disney's now. Kahl's retirement will probably take a lot of the liveliness out of Disney animation. As the tone of the Disney cartoons becomes increasingly bland, an animator of Kahl's stature will probably be considered "out of line" or "too wild."

In the future, we will probably see fewer of the animation *stylists,* such as Milt Kahl, Fred Moore, Ward Kimball, Irven Spence, Jim Tyer and Ed Love. Each one of these men had a style of movement at times unorthodox, but nevertheless captivating and funny. This type of animation is fast disappearing, as a strange fear of cartooning grips not only Disney's but most of the Los Angeles studios. There is an increased fascination with rotoscope in many studios as the subjects of their films move closer to realism. Ralph Bakshi's studio in particular now wants good draftsmen with "no animation experience necessary." Perhaps we are moving into an era where there will be almost no animation of an exaggerated or caricatured nature done from scratch. Cliff Nordberg is about the last of the *cartoonist* animators left at Disney's. His talents were not used to best advantage on *The Rescuers,* but he has some of the funniest scenes in *Pete's Dragon.*

The second most interesting character in the picture is Penny, the orphan girl who is kidnapped by Medusa and her partner, Mr. Snoops. Her character makes a good progression, from her confusing introduction aboard a collapsed steamboat to her eventual adoption at the picture's conclusion. The first time we really get to know her well is in her cat Rufus' flashback. This flashback is a predictable Disney tear-jerker, but Penny's voice (Michele Stacy) has the wistful quality needed to get us through the sequence with a minimum of groans. This section was animated by Ollie Johnston, and why it was necessary at all is the next question. Wouldn't it have been more interesting to actually show Penny's defection from the orphanage and kidnapping by Mr. Snoops and Medusa, instead of letting the audience just guess what happened? Perhaps the untimely death of Joe Flynn (Mr. Snoops' voice) prevented such a scene from being done.

Snoops' role is frustratingly undeveloped in the rest of the film. He has only a few scenes in which he is effective, such as his dialogues with Penny and Medusa. Otherwise, he is just another comic bumbler, albeit a tour de force of rough animation by Kahl.

Penny's first words when the mice Bernard and Bianca show up are: "Didn't you bring anybody *big* with you?" This was the biggest laugh in the picture both times I saw it. Penny also does a marvelous impersonation of Madame Medusa conversing with Snoops: "You are too sofffft," which is a show-stopper.

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Members of several generations of Disney animators are gathered around Wolfgang Reitherman (with pointer), producer-director of The Rescuers. *From left are Dave Michener, Ted Berman, Ollie Johnston (kneeling), Art Stevens, Don Bluth, and Frank Thomas.*

Penny goes through an underplayed version of a Kahl scene, reproducing Medusa's hand gestures and hip movements in a child-like burlesque. This shows Penny at her best; she has a sense of humor in spite of all her troubles, and the audience pulls for her. The lively animation in this sequence is by John Pomeroy.

Penny's main drawback is the design of her face; she looks too much like Ollie Johnston's Flora, Fauna and Merryweather characters in *Sleeping Beauty*. The nose and mouth, in particular, seem to rely on a formula approach to the girl's face. (Michelle Stacy herself is a very unusual-looking little girl, with large eyes and a big, shiny mouth with a protruding lower lip.) It is too bad more elements of caricature were not brought into play for the design of Penny.

The film's least successful characters are, surprisingly, the animals. In the Margery Sharp books (*The Rescuers, Miss Bianca, The Turret*) Miss Bianca is a beautiful, even sexy mouse who turns every head and makes friends wherever she goes. In the Disney film, she is a dim reflection of Eva Gabor's voice. Her design doesn't even have the appeal of the *Cinderella* mice, who are among the slicker characters in the Disney menagerie.

Of Bernard, Bianca's companion in adventure, the less said the better. Bob Newhart seems to have been chosen as Bernard's voice for box-office appeal, rather than because the voice is true to the character. Bernard is strangely fearful of the number 13 and we get the impression that he is a very superstitious mouse who is unsure of himself. He is led everywhere by Miss Bianca, who even has to talk him into his great moment of heroism in the cave sequence, when he is the first to cross the deadly blow-hole to the hiding place of the Devil's Eye.

As Rufus the cat says, "What can two little mice do?" The audience must be wondering, too. The mice cannot rescue Penny themselves but must rely on the swamp folks (who come across as refugees from a Ma and Pa Kettle movie). Bernard and Bianca were animated at one time or another by at least 20 different animators, although Don Bluth, Frank Thomas and Andy Gaskill did a lot of the close-ups. There was no single firm hand over these characters as there was with Medusa and Penny, resulting in an indistinctness of approach to the mice.

For many, the dragonfly Evinrude steals the show. He is a gimmicky bug who propels a leaf by blurring his wings and making a buzzing outboard motor noise. When he comes to a stop, he pants with a sped-up wheeze, and his small pink tongue hangs out. This got a few chuckles every time he did it. His thin-bodied, big-eyed appearance is similar to that of insect characters in some contemporary Zagreb, Romanian and Italian cartoons, such as *Self Service* by Bruno Bozzetto. Evinrude is the closest the studio has come to duplicating the "tiny, lovable characters" of Jiminy Cricket, Timothy Mouse and the *Cinderella* mice for a while, but his relationship to the film is not as intimate as those characters' was, nor is his personality warm enough to really evoke much sympathy. He is just a funny little one-joke character.

In the animation of some of the minor animal characters — such as Orville the Albatross, and Nero and Brutus, Madame Medusa's pet alligators — a lot of the fun that might have been expected was sacrificed to the *science* of animation. In an attempt to get ideas for the handling of Orville, Ollie Johnston studied live-action footage of albatross from *Water Birds*, a True-Life Adventure film. Unfortunately, the animation looks more like a direct copy of the birds' awkward landings than an original caricature of the movement. This contrasts sharply with Orville's amusing dialogue (voiced by Jim Jordan of *Fibber McGee* radio fame), reminding this viewer of the odd blend of animated actions and real photography in the *Speaking of Animals* shorts.

The scenes of the albatross actually flying are nicely staged with pseudo-multiplane camera work, accomplished by matting the cels of the albatross over the backgrounds (animation: Bob McCrea). This is effective, except that the matte paintings are out of register in many shots, creating ugly white lines around the figures at times. This may be due to the somewhat choppy nature of Xerox lines as opposed to the more definite edge an ink line provides in matching to corresponding matte paintings.

The alligators, Nero and Brutus, are not as directly lifted from nature footage as Orville is, but their extremely underplayed movements *could* have been taken from live action. I couldn't help thinking of the crocodile in *Peter Pan* and how amusing and wacky he could be, while at the same time he was an obvious peril to Captain Hook. Nero and Brutus are more like alligator-shaped guard dogs who do what they are told, at least when Medusa is giving orders. About as crazy as their comedy gets is when they first smell Bianca's perfume (animation: Cliff Nordberg), and then trap Bernard and Bianca in a pipe organ on board the old steamboat. The 'gators bang on the keys to force the mice out of the pipes, making a shambles out of

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Four of the younger animators at Disney's (from left): Andy Gaskill, Don Bluth, John Pomeroy, and Gary Goldman.

the organ in just a few seconds. The sequence has some interesting staging, with shots from inside the pipes (from a mouse's point of view), and the alligators snapping at the mice as they pop out of the pipes. The alligators are so subdued, however, that the sequence just isn't as much fun as it should have been. It is as if Frank Thomas went to a lot of trouble studying how alligators would react to such a situation, instead of throwing caution to the winds and going all-out for entertainment value. There is no logical reason that the study of live-action film or even real animals should not be a good source of ideas for handling animation in fresh ways. However, all of the effort and study is not resulting in footage that really carries an audience away.

The Rescuers, for all its shortcomings, is a more entertaining picture than *The Aristocats* or *Robin Hood,* even though it lacks some of the exuberance of *Jungle Book.* It is also a better-looking film than its immediate predecessors. The art direction returns to a bolder, richer use of color, and darker, more heavily painted (designer's color?) backgrounds. Al Dempster came out of retirement to key the picture, and though still "loose," the backgrounds recall the lush look of the early '50's. Cels were Xeroxed with colored lines to good advantage in many scenes, and the reuse of animation from other pictures is much less evident than in *Robin Hood,* with only a few scenes from *Bambi* and one from *Jungle Book* taking curtain calls.

Sadly, the silly ending fails to realize the promise of the earlier parts of *The Rescuers.* The film seems to be the victim of a rigid attitude toward animation stories at Disney Productions. It is, apparently, no longer possible to make a basically serious picture there. Bad slapstick comedy is added to every picture to enhance its box-office appeal, or simply because such comedy is now "expected" in Disney animated features. I have heard that Phil Harris' voice — already over-used — will return in the next feature, *The Fox and the Hound,* which is based on a serious book. After that, *The Black Cauldron* may be set aside in favor of another fling with comical animals.

There is thus a good possibility that the new Disney character animators will be capable of doing more than they are permitted to do, because of an overly cautious attitude toward potential stories for animated features.

Walt Disney could have been talking about the current situation when he said, a few years before his death, "The newcomers have no difficulty in knowing how to animate. The big problem is in *what* to animate."

I think that any fears for the future quality of Disney animation, now that most of the old-timers have retired, are largely unfounded. The new animators, such as John Pomeroy, Gary Goldman, Ron Clements, Chuck Harvey, Heidi Ballreich and Bill Hajee, are capable of producing animation that is, in many respects, a close match for that done by veterans like Thomas, Johnston and Nordberg. All of these animators, and Clements and Pomeroy in particular, are fast developing the skills required to put life and personality into animated characters. The real question is whether they will ever work on features that put those skills to a real test. *Pete's Dragon* is not an encouraging start.

Pete's Dragon cost $11 million, a hefty sum by Disney standards. Very little of this expenditure shows on the screen. *Mary Poppins* cost $5,187,585, and has much more color, more interesting sets, and animation of greater complexity. Much of *Pete's Dragon* was obviously shot on the Disney back lot, whose "small town" sets must pass for Maine, and at Morro Bay, California, where the best set (the lighthouse) was constructed. The color in the film is ugly; it has a greenish hue, with an extremely coarse grain, which must be due to the new Eastman color negative II 5247 film stock. The photography has the "natural light" look, which may be appropriate for some stories, but not for a fantasy like *Pete's Dragon.* Gone is the beautiful lighting and bright color one expects in a Disney musical. Elliott, the animated dragon, would thus look out of place even if he were a successful character, as he is not.

In a song that Nora (Helen Reddy) sings about Elliott, she describes him as having ". . . the head of a camel, the neck of a crocodile . . .," and so forth. By transposing lyrics we can get a pretty good idea of what Elliott *really* looks like: "He has the head of Lumpjaw, the hair of Willie the giant, the body of the Reluctant Dragon and the arms of a human being!" Elliott was designed by Ken Anderson, who should have shared screen credit with several old model sheets.

Anderson based Elliott on the Chinese dragon, with a touch of Wallace Beery, according to *American Cinematographer.* "The Chinese dragon had magical qualities and is generally associated with good rather than evil," Anderson said. "I was thinking of Wallace Beery when I drew Elliott for the first time."

Elliott may be based on the magical Chinese dragon, but he comes across as a lizard-shaped Lassie. Sometimes he even pants like a dog. With canine intelligence he finds Nora's long lost boyfriend Paul in a distant hospital, where he is suffering from amnesia. Elliott flips the bed over, causing Paul to

land on his head and thereby restoring his memory (a device I last saw used in a *Mushmouse and Punkin Puss* cartoon).

Elliott's one saving grace is the amazing contrast between his huge, bulky body and his tiny wings; he is aerodynamically impossible. At the beginning and end of the picture this contrast is exploited by Don Bluth and Cliff Nordberg, who make Elliott's galumphing attempts at flight a comical delight to the eye.

In spite of his odd design (and his even odder voice, by Charlie Callas, which consists of clicks, pops, sneezes, grunts, wheezes, and pants), Elliott is a better actor than the real people who surround him. His scenes with Pete are a case in point. Sean Marshall is a competent enough child actor, but he seems to have trouble with sentimental moments in the story. When Pete is mad at Elliott for causing a disturbance in town, he pouts and overacts. Elliott perseveres in an effort to get back in Pete's good graces by gently putting his tail around him, and trying to engage him in a game of tic-tac-toe on his enormous stomach. This is pretty weak character animation by Disney standards, but is remarkable when compared with the unbelievable

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Madame Medusa.

crudity of most contemporary character animation. The main animators of this section, Ron Clements and Gary Goldman, are making a start towards *insight* into character, through drawing.

Putting so much animation into *Pete's Dragon* was an after-thought. Elliott was supposed to have been used in only one scene, and to have remained invisible the rest of the time. The decision to animate Elliott through most of the picture came pretty late in the shooting schedule, so animation was pushed through in a record five months, using 25 animators. That haste may account for some of the animation's flaws — such as too heavy a reliance on rotoscope in at least two scenes — and the shortcuts taken on some special effects.

The irony is, animation was probably not necessary for this story. A more ethereal approach (such as Josh Meader used for the monsters from the Id in *Forbidden Planet)* might very well have worked better. The closest one gets to this feeling is the gradual disappearance of Elliott after his first appearance, a la the Cheshire Cat (animation: Ron Clements). The animation in *Pete's Dragon* suffers one of the worst fates that can befall any artist: it is superfluous.

The Disney cartoon feature will survive as long as there are people who go to see the films and as long as there are people who will accept the low pay and long hours required to produce quality animation. Despite all the competition from other producers of feature cartoons in 1977, Disney remains in the only solid position. We who love animated cartoons can only hope the studio will not waste or abuse its opportunities.

Passing Days

By MIKE BARRIER

November 13, 1977. Tonight the American Film Institute offered a special show of Zagreb cartoons at the AFI theater at Kennedy Center. The Zagreb program was in fact a lecture by Vlada Petric, illustrated with films from that Yugoslavian studio.

Petric's lecture was a compendium of cliches, but the cliches are worth examining, because they are representative of the verbal nerve gas that has all but paralyzed serious thinking about animated films for many decades now.

The films of the Zagreb school, Petric said, have five characteristics: (1) "reduced" animation; (2) simplified graphics; (3) "artistic resolution" of the backgrounds; (4) meaningful gags, and (5) ideological and philosophical content.

Petric's list of virtues is typical in that animation's distinctive virtues are played down, and borrowings from other art forms are applauded. "Reduced" animation is a wonderful euphemism for skimping on animation's essential ingredient, movement. I'm sure that the people who made *Clutch Cargo* wish they had thought of it first. Likewise, "artistic resolution" of the backgrounds can mean only that Zagreb's background painters have mastered the commonplaces of modern art. The implication of Petric's list is that animation is a Cinderella that can shine only in borrowed finery.

There has been a continuing reluctance by many of those who write about animation to let animated films stand on their own feet, and to judge them by the appropriate standards. "Appropriate standards" is, as I have had occasion to say before, a tricky term; in many instances, the person demanding the application of "appropriate standards" is really saying that the only appropriate standards are those that result in automatic approval of the work that is being judged. Something like the reverse has happened with cartoons: an animated film is the more likely to win approval the more it demands to be judged as something other than an animated film. The more an animated film cloaks itself in the language of other art forms, or in fashionable political or philosophical cant, the more likely it is to be acclaimed as superior to those animated films that do not conceal their identity.

I have said nothing so far about the cartoons that Petric showed, but there is not really much to say. Zagreb's cartoons demand acceptance for the ideas behind them, rather than for the cartoons themselves. Most of the films that Petric showed were clearly derived from the work of UPA and John Hubley; Petric professed to see a decline in quality over the years (which he traced to a desire to make more sales in the West), but no decline was visible to me. True, several of the earlier cartoons flaunted their unpleasantness, and their air of unresolved menace, as if they were bottles of castor oil, but I cannot see a shift away from that as a decline. I prefer cartoons that remind me of champagne.

November 21. Tonight I saw *Allegro Non Troppo,* Bruno Bozzetto's response to *Fantasia,* at a theater in Georgetown.

The Washington Post's second- or third-string movie reviewer gave *ANT* a rave review, comparing it favorably to *Fantasia,* but that is like comparing a shrimp to a whale. *ANT* is a rough-and-ready parody, with none of the wrong-headed splendor of *Fantasia.*

Bozetto in no way attacks *Fantasia's*

basic premises; there is no hint that he is laughing at the very idea of combining the music of Beethoven, or Stravinsky, or Vivaldi, with animated images that bear no resemblance to what the composer had in mind. Bozzetto would, I think, like to do what Disney did, but he lacks both the artistic range and the resources to do so. He parodies because he cannot emulate.

There are some pretentious passages in the film, notably the sermon on evolution that accompanies Ravel's *Bolero* and the garish images that accompany Stravinsky's *Firebird*. (The latter segment of Bozzetto's film is strongly reminiscent of Nedeljko Dragic's *Passing Days*, which was shown with the Zagreb lecture; both cartoons are nonstop demonstrations that just about everything is really rotten.) Despite these lapses, Bozzetto is clearly a vaudevillian, and the pretense of seriousness does not sit easily on him. He is given away by his cheerful crudity, his sex jokes, his Disney-ish handling of Disney-ish situations, and his sentimentality. Panic and frenzy are the typical emotional states of his characters.

November 23. A big night for animation on NBC: 90 minutes of *The Hobbit*, followed by 30 minutes of *A Doonesbury Special*. This was animation made especially for the tube, and so I did not approach it with high expectations.

I have not read *The Hobbit* for about 10 years, so I could not measure the TV version precisely against the book. Such a comparison would be pointless in any case, because the film's failings were more fundamental than any infidelity to J. R. R. Tolkien's text.

Rankin/Bass Productions, the company that produced *The Hobbit* (and that litters prime time with tacky Christmas specials every December) is not typical of most American studios in one important respect: most of the work on its films is done in Japan, where it reportedly keeps a staff of 200 busy. But the attitudes behind its films are common currency.

A preview of the Rankin/Bass *Hobbit* was offered last fall when the Harry N. Abrams company published a lavish new edition of *The Hobbit* with illustrations taken from the film. I was struck, when looking through this expensive ($29.95) book, by how bad-looking a film it was going to be. The characters seemed somehow unfocused, and yet intensely ugly. The dwarfs were typical — lines were strewn across their faces as substitutes for character — but Bilbo Baggins himself was the worst. He was evidently supposed to look like a cross between a human and a rabbit (as the name "hobbit" itself suggests), but he looked instead like a freak, the offspring of some grotesque mating of man and beast. Arthur Rankin Jr. — co-producer and co-director of *The Hobbit* with Jules Bass — was credited (if that's the word) for the character designs.

The misshapen creatures I had seen in the Abrams book looked even worse on the television screen. The animation was, at best, what some animators call "full in-betweening"; that is, the really distinctive drawings, the extremes — the drawings that define the action and establish its rhythm — were few in number. The spaces between them were filled with lots of connecting drawings — the in-betweens — that served an essentially mechanical purpose. Animation of this kind is, technically, "full" animation — there are enough drawings to provide a reasonably smooth flow of action — but it is not *good* animation, because there is a minimum of thought behind it.

The Hobbit's crass visuals would have sabotaged even a perfect soundtrack, and the film's soundtrack was far from perfect. It was filled with "star" voices, most of which delivered their lines in the flat, uninflected tones that are a sure sign of poor direction. I remember listening to the voices when *Star Trek* was made into a cartoon series by Filmation a few years ago: the contrast between the cartoon voices of Kirk and Spock and the voices of the same actors in the live-action series was striking. The voices for the cartoons were cold and uninteresting — like clay awaiting a sculptor (i.e., a director who knew what he wanted and could convey that to the actors). Listening to those voices, I became aware of how dependent TV cartoons are on those people — Daws Butler, June Foray, Hans Conried, and their like — who are essentially self-starters, and can draw on years of experience in radio and theatrical cartoons. TV cartoons would be even more dismal than they are if such performers were not active.

There were some acceptable voices (such as Conried's) on *The Hobbit*'s soundtrack, but the only one that rose much above the ordinary was that of Gollum. His voice was provided by Brother Theodore, who is, significantly, a New York radio personality. Gollum's voice had a frightening intensity that overwhelmed the insipid images to which it was attached. If the Disney studio ever gets around to making *The Black Cauldron*, it should consider using Brother Theodore as the voice for one of the evil creatures in that story. I'm not sure that *any* cartoon studio can provide images strong enough to match this voice, or others equally strong, but Disney's is still the likeliest candidate.

A Doonesbury Special followed *The Hobbit*, and could not help but look good in comparison. I do not care much for the comic strip, even though it is now about the only newspaper strip I ever bother to read. It will probably seem as dated and alien to the readers of the future as some old strips seem to us now, and for the same reason: at its core is a sentimentality peculiar to its own time. In *Doonesbury*'s case it is the sentimentality of the young rebels of the 60's. *Doonesbury* is, in the words of William Wilson in the Los Angeles *Times*, "steeped in upper-middle-class, college-educated, well-heeled smugness about a brand of nonconformity that is, itself, conformist in the extreme."

As it happens, Wilson was not writing about the strip, but about a film made 10 years ago by John and Faith Hubley, who made *A Doonesbury Special* in collaboration with Garry Trudeau, *Doonesbury's* creator. I think that Wilson was too harsh in his assessment of the Hubleys. Even their worst films radiate not a hip smugness, but rather the earnestness of good people who have more answers than questions.

A Doonesbury Special was unsatisfying to me not because of any failings in its execution, nor even because I am not impressed by the strip, but because it was a potted version of the strip, just as the *Peanuts* specials are a potted version of *that* strip. *A Doonesbury Special* was not a rethinking of the strip in animation terms. The elaborate tracking shots pointed this up, rather than disproving it, because they were disconnected from the rest of the film, and violated the relatively static staging that had been picked up from the strip.

I am not sure that *Doonesbury* could have withstood the stress of being reworked by people who are more gifted than its creator; the strip's amateurism is an essential part of its appeal. But it seems a shame that the Hubleys did not make the effort.

Perhaps if John Hubley had not died last February at the age of 62, while the film was in production, *A Doonesbury Special* would bear more of his personal stamp. As it is, the film seems more like Trudeau's than Hubley's.

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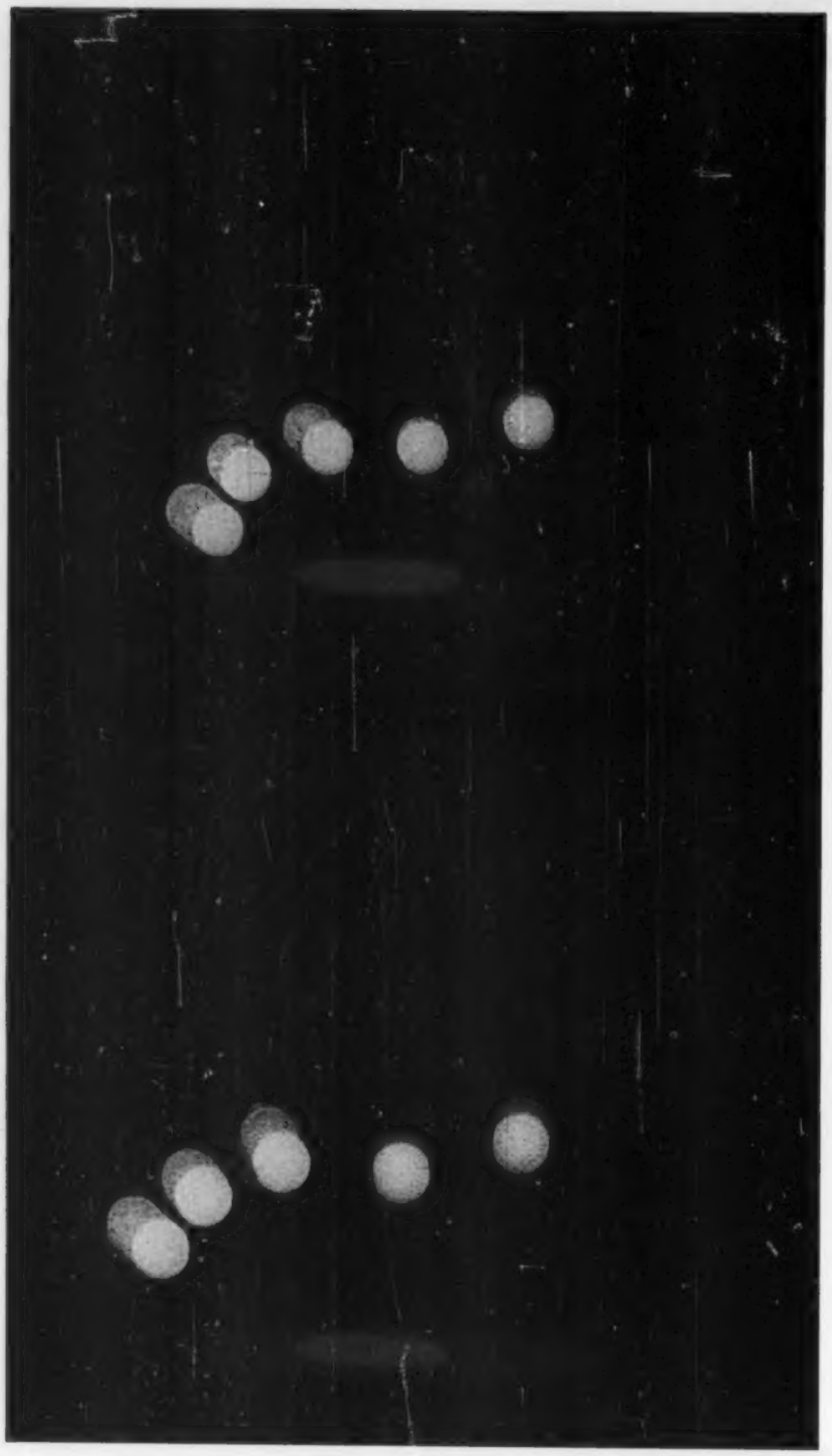

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